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Self, Differentiation, and Integration in a Non-traditional Occupation

by

James Richard Bondarenko

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

in

School Psychology

Department of Educational Psychology

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1995

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Self, Differentiation, and Integration, in a Non-Traditional Occupation" submitted by James Richard Bondarenko in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in School Psychology.

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Date: October 2, 1995

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all the women who work in "nothing but smoky light and red spike heels". (The quote is from the poem Biding Time by Timothy Russel).

> What would happen if one woman told the truth about herself? The world would split open. Muriel Ruckeyser.

ABSTRACT

This inquiry investigates the life world of the night club stripper using a narrative-interpretive approach to inquiry guided by moderate hermeneutic philosophy. The findings are presented in relation to the literature on women's development, identity formation, postmodernism, narrative psychology, and dance phenomenology.

The findings present six different women who nevertheless share a common way of being as strippers reflecting what Bruner calls a distributed self. These women needed to feel that they were independent, in control of their work context , their shows, and their sexuality in order to perform. In doing so these women developed a stripper persona which was distinct from their everyday self, allowing them to protect their everyday self while performing. This aspect of the self system can be seen as a virtual self consistent with the notion of multiple selves. It is fundamentally an embodied existence. Trust/mistrust, relationship/isolation, and being understood were themes reflecting their relationships both in and out of the stripping context. These women found that their co-workers were often the only people that understood them. In dealing with customers these women developed negative perceptions of men which were reinforced on a daily basis. Their relationships with each other provided validation for their feelings towards their customers and men in general. Interactions with customers reflected their need for control, attention, and to avoid becoming vulnerable. Becoming vulnerable was seen as the movement forward of the everyday self into the stripping context.

For these women the factors of integration and differentiation were seen to occur in the family of origin and were generally replicated in the stripping context in their role as

strippers.

A cognitive science based schema activation model is presented to show that the distinction between the everyday self and other selves can be seen as the activation of self structure components in accord with the context. The self is seen as a system that adjusts and adapts to context allowing for the construction of multiple selves each with their own loci of coherence.

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Most of all I would also like to thank the six women who participated in this inquiry and who most generously allowed me to converse with them about their life world. Special thanks go to Alice for her kindness and generosity. I am particularly grateful to Jennifer who greatly enriched my understanding of how she sees the world and who patiently answered my questions over the course of numerous long and often involved conversations.

> When you write, you lay out a line of words. The line of words is a miner's pick, a woodcarver's gauge, a surgeon's probe. You wield it, and it digs a path you follow. Soon you find yourself deep in new territory. Annie Dillard.

> As Darwin wrote to his friend Hooker, "I thank you most sincerely for all your assistance; and whether or no my book may be wretched you have done your best to make it less wretched". Weiner (1994, p. 324).

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CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

A. Origins

> The exhibition of the human body becomes a display of art; American burlesque has made undressing a drama. (de Beauvoir, 1952, p. 566).

> A naked dancing woman is one of the great mythological symbols. There's something serious going on when a naked woman dances; there is an undertone. The mystery and allure of the dancing woman are that she conceals the inner thing which we can never see. (Paglia, 1990).

This study began during a year in which I was a counselling practicum student. I was seeing a number of couples with relationship problems. The women in these relationships were feeling the weight of their partners expectations, and were expressing their confusion at the mixed messages their partners were giving them. They were expected to be warm and nurturing and yet they had hopes and dreams that were not being given fair consideration by their partners. The literature that my female colleagues inspired me to read suggested that women were often not allowed to define their being. It was how others perceived them that mattered most. Simply put, their voices were not being heard.

Later that summer I was away on trip to Ottawa when a friend of mine suggested that we step into a nightclub. The night club scene was relatively unfamiliar to me as was the world of the night club stripper since my previous experiences with exotic entertainment had been limited to an occasional stag party. As my friend and I walked into the club I remember that my feelings were a mixture of anticipation, apprehension, and a considerable amount of adolescent like curiosity. After sitting down and ordering our drinks we attempted to hold a conversation which was difficult because the music was very loud during the stage shows and the place was jam packed with a boisterous after- work crowd. We casually looked the place over, pausing to watch the stage shows and the dancers prowling amongst the crowd, for here they not only had stage shows but table dancing as well. As an athletics coach I

recall being very aware of how well some of the dancers moved, like good athletes but with an aesthetic sensibility, knowing what attracts the eye. Their movements seemed to exemplify more that just simple body awareness or athleticism; they were closer to Angell's (1989) description of ball players in the film Bull Durham–as sexual animals who "do beautiful things with their bodies, it says, and we watch them not just to see who wins." (p. 57). The conversation came to an abrupt halt as we took notice of a table dancer carefully walking toward us, stepping around the waitresses and over the strewn limbs of patrons slouching at their tables. She stopped just across from where we were sitting to talk to a man in a business suit who she seemed to know, probably a regular. After teasing with him she began to perform a table dance as my friend and I laughed at our "good fortune" at getting a table dance for free. We watched her as she slowly undressed, her hands smoothening , caressing her supple body while speaking to her client softly, in a low, suggestive voice. A few minutes later, with her customer sweating and loosening his tie, we began to engage her in an easy banter, kibitzing with her as she teased her customer, and she quick witted, responded in kind, laughing with us and making jokes. She eventually decided that we were safe to hang out with; safe enough at least to sit talk to during her breaks throughout the evening.

I had come into this club like so many of the men there, motivated by the anticipation of an evening of titillation, conversation, and amusement. I was not prepared for an evening of intelligent conversation with a stripper. As we talked throughout that evening I became fascinated in the contrast between the seductress she appeared to be on stage, and the articulate young woman speaking to us about her life as a University student with her musician boyfriend. She was a living, breathing contradiction to the stereotypes and preconceptions that many would hold to be true of exotic dancers. While I had known that strippers must have some kind of life away from the bar scene, it was still a surprise to find such a person in this night club and it piqued my curiosity about this unique group of individuals.

> ...but that happens to any attractive woman. Men make up an idea of who you are. (Stone, 1992, p. 88).

I returned home with many questions about exotic dancers which I set aside as soon as the school year began. Two months later, during an evening class on vocational education, my advisor, who was the professor, embarked on a lecture on sex trade workers. This immediately reminded me of my experiences that night in the Ottawa bar and after class I approached him with the idea of the appropriateness of such a topic for a dissertation. At the time I was feeling frustrated since my initial proposal, to study the effects of hypertext media on thinking and memory processes, had proved unworkable. My advisor cautioned me about the lack of literature about stripping as well as the political problems associated with conducting research on a topic which could be seen as mere prurient interest. Nevertheless, I conducted a literature search and worked up a proposal for a research project. My reading brought to mind conversations I had with women in the past who told me that there were times when being female and attractive made it difficult for others, and particularly men, to take them seriously. During that evening out, I recalled hearing comments from the patrons such as, "If only I could have her for ten minutes." I wondered what these women's personal relationships were like and what this patron's life would be like if he had been living with a stripper. Over the next several months I embarked on an exploration of the night club scene and I would pick an evening or two out of the week and go down to the local strip bar to watch the shows and the patrons, occasionally engaging the bar staff in conversations about the nature of the business. As I experimented with different approaches to introducing my self and my research proposal to the strippers I quickly found out that a direct approach was viewed by them with suspicion. It was almost a year after my experience in Ottawa that I met an agent who booked strippers and who offered to introduce me to the strippers themselves. She suggested that I should be involved in the campaign to prevent the government from banning exotic entertainment in Alberta if I wanted to be seen as trustworthy in the eyes of the strippers. Thus I worked as an advisor to a lawyer who had been hired by people in the stripping business to block the efforts to ban them. This involvement proved to be fortuitous since it allowed me to make a number of contacts with strippers, their boyfriends, other agents, photographers, bar owners, and other co-workers. These people entrusted their thoughts and feelings to me in ways that would have been much more difficult with a more formal "external" approach.

At that time I was struggling to formulate a question and to find a method appropriate to the task. This difficulty began to resolve itself as I took the advice of my colleagues and read the literature on women's development and identity formation. These readings and the discussions I was having with colleagues and the people in the stripping business changed the nature of the questions I was considering and moved the study to a place where it would fit more comfortably into the literature related to developmental and educational psychology.

B. The Nature of the Problem

> They just want her to be the thing. Its different for everybody. For me, I was the diet coke girl, the Clairol girl, the Charlie girl in Europe. In each, you represent a certain archetypal thing. Men want you to be that. It has nothing to do with who you really are. (Stone, 1992, p. 88).

In our culture occupations are central to one's definition of self. But their influence is not merely restricted to the context of one's job. They may extend to other roles and activities including the roles of parent, spouse, friendships, leisure activities and lifestyle. This may be especially true of those holding occupations which place them in the public eye or that are considered to be low in status such as the exotic dancer. Recently striptease became the subject of controversy in Alberta where its opponents argued that it causes harm and leads to an unsavory lifestyle. People, in promoting such views of exotic dancers, among other claims, have associated them with drug and alcohol abuse, promiscuity, prostitution, the transmission of sexual diseases, and being the cause of sexual assault against women and children. The negative stereotype that such viewpoints engender, while serving the interests of their opponents and selling newspapers, does not aid in understanding how this occupation influences their lives. Although there are male exotic dancers, the focus of public criticism was almost solely on female exotic dancers. Female strippers will also be the focus of this study. Since my discussions with these women was not confirming the claims being made against them I began to believe that a political agenda was obscuring the understanding of the lived reality of these women.

The myths, stereotypes, and assumptions about dancers have been a part of the lives of dancers for centuries and certainly have not been unique to those performing exotic dance or to dancers in our culture. As Hannah (1988) notes in the book Dance, Sex, and Gender, ballet dancing has been regarded as low status work for centuries, with the dancers themselves being associated with working class origins and sexual impropriety. In this respect, current views of exotic dancers are part of a long tradition of stereotyping dancers as well as a view of women that focuses on how they appear rather than who they are and how they define themselves. In addition, a number of researchers and authors (Dragu & Harrison, 1988; Miles, 1988) have noted that part of the discomfort that such performers and images they engender has its origins in the ways in which the female body and women's sexuality has been portrayed in Western culture. Certain belief systems have held women's sexuality as being mysterious and beyond rational understanding. This is in accord with beliefs about women that associate them with nature, emotionality and the body as contrasted with traditional portrayals of men as rational, objective, spiritual beings (Highwater, 1990; Miles, 1988; Weaver, 1987; Wolf, 1990). In our culture the latter attributes are held to be more important. Thus, it is likely that part of the difficulty that dancers experience in being acknowledged as human beings is related to the stereotyping of women in general.

According to governmental classifications exotic dancers fall into the category of independent business people and in many ways they may exemplify certain cultural ideals and definitions of mental health in terms of their personal assertiveness, independence, and instrumentality which are often regarded as traditional male attributes. At the same time exotic dancers appear to contradict such descriptions in that they offer themselves for male viewing. Their jobs require them to portray a certain view of woman as seductive, mysterious, and beautiful. Exotic dancers may have found a way to integrate seemingly contradictory characteristics into their work roles or perhaps they do not see this as a contradiction, but as behavior specific to context.

While this study focuses on the role of exotic dancer and its relationship to other roles dancers may hold, it also examines the identity of the exotic dancer and how they develop as women. Traditional views of the self or identity have long been influenced by

essentialist arguments emphasizing a core stable essence (e.g., the psychoanalytic tradition) as well as by psychometrics (e.g., trait theories) (Bruner, 1990). This has led to confusion rather than clarity with the creation of a proliferation of 'selfs' that have questionable validity, slippery conceptual definitions and elusive relationships to each other.

More recent views of identity, such as the constructivist view proposed by Gergen (1982) have provided a challenge to traditional views of self. These views reflect a view of psychological phenomena that is interpretivist, constructivist, and distributive. As a result, the self is constructed, and rather than remaining static, it changes with context and role. Gergen (1991) suggests that people have a number of identities or roles that coexist within an individual. Some may hold roles that contradict one another without any problem, while others may be left with a feeling of fragmentation (or what Gergen called the "post-modern condition"). Along similar lines, a number of researchers focused on the self as a story teller, a constructor of narratives about one's life (Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988; Spence, 1984). From these perspectives self is a more open system, subject to change, or revision, and dependent on context and relationship. These views then, where interpretation and the construction of meaning are central features, are consistent with the hermeneutical perspective used in this study.

As I was in the process of formulating my question it was suggested to me that it would be prudent to pay attention to theories of development and that Erikson's theory would be an appropriate starting point. As I read further it became apparent that although women's studies was an area of knowledge that was receiving wide recognition it was still the case that the psychological development of women remained largely unexplored and underrepresented in the literature. Influential theorists, who based their findings on studies of groups of men, have assumed that women's development is or should be like that of men (e.g., Kohlberg) while others have interpreted the difference between how men and women develop as reflecting womens inherent inferiority (e.g., Freud). Even theorists which have acknowledged the importance of one's social and cultural history (e.g., Erikson, Maslow) assume that what is important or salient for men must necessarily be viewed as such by women, or that women by virtue of their biology should be relegated to certain roles which are often undervalued in western society (Penfold & Walker, 1988). This often results in

women appearing to be deficient if the standard for psychological health or normalcy is that of men (Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1990). Thus, as de Beauvoir (1950) pointed out decades ago, woman is the "Other" and one could argue that the research community has had an influence in this regard. By this, I take de Beauvoir's notion of Other to mean that where woman is defined with reference to man, man is not defined with reference to woman. The Other, as I read de Beauvoir, by virtue of not being like man, is set up to be inferior in status. It is my contention that psychological theorists, as noted previously, tended to define the experiences of girls and women in terms of the experiences of boys and men – assuming that women's experience should be modeled after the example of men. A number of writers and researchers have started to address these problems by presenting theories that challenge these traditional views as women begin to define themselves based on their own experiences (eg. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1987; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Kaschak, 1992; Miller, 1986). These readings and my conversations with friends, colleagues, and dancers fostered in me a growing sense of the importance of providing the co-researchers with the opportunity to relate their lived experiences, to respect their points of view, and to use a method which would allow their points of view to be represented with a minimum of distortion on my part.

C. The Question

In all occupations there are beliefs and behaviors which characterize and distinguish that occupation. Exotic dancers share certain "ways of being" that define them in their occupation. At the same time they may, like the majority of us, possess certain ways of being which distinguish them from their fellow workers. They may also hold many other roles which are likely to intersect and overlap in unique ways. Exotic dancers may also find themselves behaving and relating to others in ways which are different from the actions that would be typical for them in a strip bar. This study explores the life-world of exotic dancers. I am primarily interested in the personal experience of being an exotic dancer, how dancers define themselves, and how being a dancer influences and is influenced by other areas in their lives. Central to this study will be an examination of how their occupation defines their personal and working relationships and in turn influences their roles as dancers. How they

came to be exotic dancers, what things they learned in order to fit that role, and what they see themselves doing after they leave stripping, are among the questions this study will address. The narratives that emerge from the conversations with the dancers represent the process of making sense of their lives. This activity of meaning making is the activity of being a person, a self, as Kegan (1982) has suggested. It is my thesis that the self system shifts with context and allows for the possibility of multiple selves, as the self system adapts and adjusts to contextual variation.

The current study will attempt to provide descriptions of exotic dancers' experiences from the standpoint of the dancer. Instead of merely describing individuals' characteristics I will attempt to provide a description of processes as part of the life world of the dancer. In doing so I will be using a hermeneutical approach which is most suited to answering questions dealing with peoples' life worlds.

D. The Importance of The Study

Hughes (1958) has pointed out that one can learn as much about higher prestige occupations from applying conceptions learned from studying lower status work, as one can by applying to other occupations what one has learned from higher status work. While one cannot know beforehand what may be learned from a study of strippers, one may learn things applicable to other work settings that will be useful. For example, women who work in the exotic dance may have, by virtue of their role, learned strategies to cope with sexual harassment. Knowing how they are able to do so would be of benefit to all who are faced with such behavior. Exotic dancers with their limited career spans eventually look for something else to do. At present we know little about the kinds of academic advice they would seek and what kind of information would be useful for them. Given their particular lifestyle What needs to be considered in order for them to make a transition to another way or means of living? What kind of knowledge do they acquire in their occupation? What do they anticipate for themselves when they leave stripping and in what ways do they see this happening? In this regard, vocational counsellors may learn some important information enabling them to be more effective with such people as well as those in related occupations (e.g., other entertainers, athletes, independent workers).

Missing from the majority of the studies are the voices of the women themselves. Reiterating Halpern's (1981) position, women who are erotic entertainers have been generally misunderstood by most in society as well as by the clinical literature. Feminist researchers have been pointing out the inadequacy of much of the current and past psychological research in addressing the lived realities of women in general (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1987; Gilligan,1982; Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1990; Kaschak , 1992). In this sense the current study will attempt to allow the dancers to voice their lived experiences, allowing their presuppositions, metaphors, and frames of reference to emerge while avoiding the temptation to define their experiences in the language of traditional psychological theories. Thus the current study may offer a contribution to developmental psychology and identity theory while challenging stereotypical descriptions of dancers.

E. Definitions

1. Though exotic dancers often refer to themselves euphemistically as 'dancers' I will use the term dancer when referring to dancers in general or where it is evident from the context that I am referring to a specific kind of dancer through use of that general term. I will use the appropriate term for a particular kind of dancer where this distinction is necessary, as, for a ballet dancer.
2. Given that striptease performers use a number of terms to refer to themselves, the terms, exotic dancer, stripper, and burlesque entertainer will be used interchangeably in reference to women who take off their clothes for a living either to full nudity or to a g-string unless a further distinction is required.
3. The term nude dancing will be used only where, in the course of discussion, it is necessary to differentiate between stripping down to full nudity versus to a g-string.
4. Table dancing refers to the practice of dancing on a small platform, usually among the crowd, to a patron or group of patrons who have paid specifically for a more or less private dance and/or away from the main stage area. Ramp dancing is a variation on table dancing in which performers work on a part of a stage or ramp for a particular customer.

5. Features, are featured exotic dancers who travel in a circuit. They are usually booked through an agent.
6. House dancers are exotic dancers who work in one location.
7. The term artistic dance is used in reference to traditional theatrical dance forms which include those forms of dance developed for public performance in western culture such as classical ballet, modern dance, jazz dance, and tap dance (Brightman, 1993).

F. Limitations

This study follows a hermeneutic approach to inquiry in which the researcher's foreunderstanding of the phenomenon is considered to be an important part of the interpretive process. Thus in conducting this inquiry I do not make the claim that another researcher's interpretation would be equivalent to my own. Hermeneutic philosophy values multiple perspectives in which it is acknowledged that other views of the phenomenon can be informative. It is my hope though, that others, in reading this work and by following the procedures and methods of interpretation can understand how I came to interpret the text as it was constructed. In addition, this inquiry cannot be viewed as an attempt to uncover some ultimate truth with respect to the lived experiences of exotic dancers. They are to be considered as unique individuals with unique life experiences. This, however does not necessarily preclude the derivation of common themes defining a common pattern to their being in the world as exotic dancers. While I cannot claim that the findings of this inquiry are generalizable to other types of dancer I do believe that the results may be found to be generally relevant to others stripping under similar circumstances and regulations. To some extent this can be determined by checking the interpretations for a goodness of fit with the co-researchers as well as others who did not participate in the conversations in the study proper by asking the question–Do the findings of this study fit with their experience and understandings?

CHAPTER TWO
METHOD

A. An Interpretive Approach

> I'll make my report as if I told a story for I was taught as a child on my home world that Truth is a matter of imagination. The soundest fact may fail or prevail in the style of its telling: like that singular organic jewel of our seas, which grows brighter as one woman wears it and, worn by another, dulls and goes to dust. Facts are no more solid, coherent, round, and real than pearls are. But both are sensitive. (Le Guin, 1969, p. 1)

This dissertation, as noted, uses a hermeneutic approach to inquiry. In this research I follow Honey's (1987) suggestion that interviews can be considered as texts, reflecting the hermeneutic philosophies of Gadamer (1975) and Ricouer (1981). In this study the text consists of the transcripts of my conversations with exotic dancers.

I take the view that through providing a climate in which the co-researchers are allowed to tell their stories we can achieve an understanding of their life world. The ideal, as described by Gadamer, is to hold a genuine conversation which necessitates both people being actively engaged in uncovering an understanding of the phenomenon. My experience, however, of the process is more akin to the searching, hesitant, backtracking, reflexive process described by Paget (1983).

Unlike traditional phenomenological studies which attempt to bracket the researchers preconceptions to attain a pure pre-reflective, bias-free understanding, in this study I am attempting to understand the life-world of dancers through my own interpreting rather than searching for universal essences. In the hermeneutic approach one uses one's values, biases, and preconceptions in the interview as well as in the interpretation of the text itself. Gadamer (1975) suggests that the approach requires that one consider that one's prior understanding of the phenomenon may be incorrect. It implies that one remain open to a new understanding.

The asking of questions is central to the hermeneutic process and an attitude of knowing that one does not know is brought to the encounter. The relationship with the text is one of distance and proximity, of distanciation and appropriation. This relates to the hermeneutic spiral in which I come to the encounter with my personal history of experiences and understandings (my foreunderstandings) and as I read and consider and derive themes from the conversations, my previous understanding undergoes a transformation – I come to a new understanding.

> I believe that language is alive and that when you hear something it has an entirely different meaning than when you see it on a page. (Anderson, 1995).

The dual purposes of maintaining cross subject comparability along with the need for rapport are too often at odds with each other in traditional research (Oakly,1981). However as Mishler intimates it is less useful to see personal involvement as dangerous than it is to view it as the condition under which people come to know and understand one another. This sentiment has been expressed in the work of Gilligan, Brown and Rogers (1990) who state:

> In the process, I, the reader, become engaged with or involved with her , the speaker, and as I listen for the way in which she speaks about herself, I am Likely to experience myself coming into relation with her, so that I begin to know her terms and to respond to what she is saying emotionally as well as intellectually. As her words about herself enter my psyche, a process of connection begins between her feelings and thoughts and my feelings and thoughts in response to hers, so that she affects me, the researcher, and I begin to learn from her–about her, about myself, and about the world we share in common, here specifically the world of relationships and its geography of moral concern. Once I allow the voice of another to enter my psyche, I can no longer claim a detached position. (p. 102-103)

Gadamer (1975) felt that it was important to distinguish between those preconceptions of the phenomenon that are productive from those that are not. Gallagher (1992) suggests that productive preconceptions will be found to be legitimate structures that

make sense and are reasonable. Those that are not productive will fail the challenge of interpretation.

In this work there is no claim being made to one ultimate truth or reading of the text. However, this should not be taken to mean that the interpretive process is completely subjective or that this results in a purely relativistic position. Rather, given my foreunderstandings, I come to a particular reading of the text which can then be submitted to a juridical process. A process in which my understanding can be read by others and in particular by the co-researchers, for their appraisal of how well their life experiences have been described.

Those in need of further clarification with respect to hermeneutic philosophy and method are encouraged to consider the following references: Gallagher, (1992), Polkinghorne, (1988), and Warnke, (1987).

In this inquiry I was also attempting to present the voices of the women as clearly as possible thus I am faced with the task of balancing a search for themes with a desire to stay as close to these women's stories as possible. My solution was to follow an interpretive strategy that is more closely related to that of Gilligan (1982), in which, as Brown and Tappan (1991) point out, one follows a psychological rather than a philosophical hermeneutics. Here the focus is on,

> ... the psychological complexity of individuals' narrative accounts of conflicts and dilemmas in their lives. As such it shares much in common with the way psychoanalysts interpret individual cases – focusing on understanding the meaning of language that expresses and represents the dynamics of relational conflict in the psyche – and with the way literary critics interpret short stories and novels – focusing on understandning the meaning of an author's use of plot, style, character, and form: (p. 82).

My inquiry used a method which blended both hermeneutic and narrative approaches–balancing a quest for finding similarity and differences, and the uniqueness of the individual with themes that are common to the coresearchers. In this respect I followed the suggestions of Mishler (1986) in trying to ensure that the individual voices are not lost in overly abstract thematic procedures. I submitted one protocol to the procedures suggested

by Colaizzi (1978) however I found that over the three levels of thematic abstraction the individual voice of the co-reseracher was lost–the interpretation was removed from her lived experience. It is for this reason that I decided to stick to one level of thematic construction rather than follow the traditional procedure of constructing a hierarchy of increasingly abstract themes. These considerations prompted me to use the idea of voice (as found in Gilligan et al, 1990), of the self-in-relation, the body, and self as a framework for organizing the data in the discussion as well as in keeping contact with the original voices of the women in this study.

Readers who wish to gain further knowledge of narrative approaches to inquiry are advised to seek out the following works: Belenky et al (1987) Bruner, (1990, 1991), Gergen, (1990), Gilligan, (1982), Landau, (1984), Mishler, (1986,1990b), Paget, (1983), Polanyi, (1981), Polkinghorne, (1988), and Young, (1984, 1987), among many others.

B. Validity

Osborne (1990) has suggested that the natural science and human science approaches differ in their conceptions of reliability and validity. The natural sciences focus on consistency, replicability, and stability of measurement in their conceptualization of reliability. As Wertz (1986) notes, there is some conceptual ambiguity between the concepts in that issues of validity are related to reliability. Osborne further states that " measurement is always measurement of something which has to be conceptualized in order to be measured (validity)" (p.87). The nature of the construct will determine how it is to be measured.

In the human sciences experience is perspectival and contextual. Although the approach recognizes that there can be a number of perspectives of a given phenomenon, "Sameness (reliability) can arise out of the surface inconsistency, variability, and relativity of human perception" (Osborne, 1990, p. 87). Wertz (1986) suggests that these apparent differences can be taken as binocular disparity. Multiple perspectives can thus lead to a unified description of shared experiences. The human sciences approach has its focus on meaning rather than facts. Stable meaning can transcend variable facts or situations. Kvale (1990) indicates that there is no absolute interpretation but that interpretations can produce both contradictory or coherent meanings. Ultimately one can argue for their interpretation

as persuasively as possible, supported by references to the data while the judgement of its adequacy left to the reader (Osborne, 1990).

Osborne (1990) suggests that validity, from the human sciences perspective, can be assessed in four ways. First, by describing one's procedures and bracketing or putting forth ones fore-understandings the researcher provides the reader with the opportunity to understand how the interpretation was constructed.

Second, during the collection and interpretation of the data the researcher can check with the co-researcher for a goodness of fit. Does the interpretation fit with their experience of the phenomenon? This does not imply that there needs to be correspondence for the co-researcher may deny a facet of a valid interpretation. For example they may be defensive about something (Osborne, 1990).

A third way of determining validity is the juridical process of presenting coherent and convincing arguments. This is similar to the argument suggested by Mishler (1990) where exemplars are used as the basis of validation. Ultimately, the researcher must ask whether the finding of ones own research are useful (Osborne, 1990).

The final check on the validity of interpretations depends on whether or not the description agrees with the experiences of other people outside the study but who have experienced the phenomenon (Osborne, 1990). Thus in the current example the thematic structure of the dancers lived experiences should resonate with that of other dancers who were not part of the study.

In summary, validity from the perspective of the natural sciences focuses on the actual occurrence of an event along with the causal factors related to the event. In the human sciences there is less concern for causal influences with a greater emphasis placed on the meaning of an event for an individual or group of individuals. In this respect human science approaches are more concerned with verisimilitude than with truth (Mishler, 1990). In both approaches, however, the ultimate criteria seems to rest on the warrants for one's claims.

C. Participants

The six female co-researchers (using pseudonyms) who participated in the study ranged in age from 18 to 35. Their experience as exotic dancers and in their backgrounds

varied from the beginner to someone who has been dancing for more than ten years. Some of the women were children of single parent families, while others were from larger, intact families. I was also successful in finding subjects with varied educational backgrounds. One of the women had not completed high school while two others had attended post-secondary educational institutions. Only six co-researchers were chosen for this project due to the limitations of project size and in order to obtain more in-depth information by conducting several interviews. The co-researchers were selected on the advice of an agent who indicated that a particular dancer would be interested in relating her story to me and was articulate. I chose to go through an agent because it had been my experience that dancers are wary of direct requests from men. In this way their concern about the truthfulness of my story was more likely to be allayed to a some degree. Further it provided them with an opportunity to see me and speak with me in the familiar working environment of the agent's office. After explaining the purposes of my study to the co-researchers and providing them with a written description of the nature of the study, we agreed on a time and place to meet for the interview. At this first session I answered their questions about the nature of the study and the informed consent form was signed and witnessed.

D. Foreunderstandings

The current study uses a hermeneutic approach and as such the researcher's presuppositions or prior understandings of the phenomenon must be made explicit in order for others to be able to acknowledge researcher's perspective. To accomplish this task Colaizzi (1978) suggests that the researcher needs to address questions relating to how and why one came to study the particular question, and the assumptions and presuppositions one brings to the inquiry.

The how and the why of the study was addressed in the first section of chapter one. To maintain some coherence, however, I offer the following brief summary: This study began several years ago while I was away on a trip. I, as well as a friend of mine, decided to have a "boys night out" experience at a strip bar. While there we had the privilege of speaking with one of the entertainers during her breaks over the course of the evening. The dancer revealed that she was a university student working towards a BA is sociology. It was

during these conversations that my previous notions of who strippers were as people was challenged. I came away from that experience mystified because they were and were not who they appeared to be. As a result my curiosity about their lives was raised.

The following ideas comprise my assumptions and preconceptions relating to the issue of the lived experiences of exotic dancers:

· Dancers are unique individuals and it is likely that there are few common themes among their experiences.

· My understanding of athletic performance leads me to believe that exotic dancers' thought processes must in some way reflect their stage performance or perhaps they have automated it to the point that they do not really think about the fantasy they are creating on stage.

· Exotic dancers are likely to be especially conscious of their bodies.

· Coming from a background in cognitive psychology, I believe that getting at processes that are pre-reflective or automatic (e.g., the experience of listening to Mozart) is fraught with difficulty and may result in the reporting of a constructive process. Similar difficulties are likely to be present in obtaining verbal reports of lived bodily experiences (e.g., kicking a ball) since they are encoded in a 'different kind of language'.

· In reading feminist psychology I have come to believe that womens' experiences are essentially different from that of men. Their conception of the world is different; they live in (and construct) different worlds.

· It is my belief that our understanding of self and world and their interrelations comes into being through processes similar to those described by Piaget, in his description of schema formation, via accommodation and assimilation. We learn to see the world from a particular point of view colored by our relations to social and historical traditions. This understanding, however, evolves and changes over time and thus human understanding is finite, temporal, and circular, but never complete (Gallagher, 1992). There is no such thing as objective reality that we can know independent of our point of view. Knowledge, including scientific knowledge, is a construction of the human mind. Sensory data are filtered through our specific neurobiological structures and made into perceptions and cognitions. The human mind is at least partially constructed in a social cultural context in which it comes to its own knowing of the world. Scientific facts are not discovered they are invented. In this regard

science is more an agreed upon set of procedures than constructs or theories (Scarr, 1985).

· Following from the previous point I believe that all description is interpretive.

· Selves are located not only in private consciousness but also in a cultural and historical set of circumstances. Thus the self can be conceptualized as both distributed and situated. These views are consistent with the cultural psychology put forth by Bruner (1990).

· Lives and selves are seen to be the result of the process of meaning making. This places narrative in a central position with respect to the understanding of lived experience. A cultural psychology does not deny the importance of biological and physical resources, but integrates them with the notion, that human lives reflect cultural and situational-historical circumstances (Bruner, 1990).

E. The Interviews

The data was collected through open ended interviews that were held on one or more separate occasions. They were conducted in coffee shops, restaurants, or other quiet areas near the women's work environment. The interviews were recorded on a Sony pro walkman tape recorder on audio cassettes. The approach taken was informal and although I had a list of topics I wished to address, I did not use a formal question-answer approach. This context, I felt, allowed for a more natural conversation-like interview to take place. The aim of this approach was to offer the chance for these women to experience an environment in which they could express themselves with freedom and openness.

The interviews were transcribed by myself and a printed transcript was sent to the co-researchers. This provided them with an opportunity to review what they had said, to eliminate anything that they felt would compromise their identity or that they felt uncomfortable with, and to add anything that might have been missed in the initial encounters. After the data was analyzed and written into a report my description of their experiences as strippers were sent to them for a "goodness of fit" appraisal.

F. Interpretive Procedures

This study used a variation of the procedures outlined by Colaizzi (1978) and Gilligan et al. (1990):

1. The transcript is read while listening to it, in total, several times in order to get an overall feel for the interview. It was important for me to both listen and read because I felt that important turns of phrase or nuances could be missed by a simple reading of the transcript.
2. Phrases, sentences, and statements that reflect the phenomenon were highlighted in the text.
3. The statements were then grouped to form clusters. Words or short phrases were used to encapsulate the statements as themes. The themes were constructed individually for each person as the statements and phrases were placed together into the workspace of the word processing program. This is an interpretive process since one must balance staying with the meaning of the text while also reading between the lines. In this phase I shifted between the original transcripts to the grouped themes to validate them by asking, (a) if the themes propose anything not contained in the protocol; and (b) if anything in the protocol was not encompassed by the themes (Colaizzi, 1978). My approach at this stage was similar to that of Giorgi (1975) who describes the process of trying to understand the interview from the perspective of the co-researcher. The question of what it felt like to be her and the meaning of that experience for her was always in the back of my mind. At the same time I attempted to be open to the data by recognizing that my understandings of her lived experience may be wrong.
4. The results of the thematic analysis were then integrated into a written description of each stripper's experience. I choose to emphasize the stripper's experiences in their own words as much as possible, to avoid being so abstract that the co-researchers would no longer relate to the descriptions. In doing so I embedded their phrases into the thematic framework. These phrases acted much like first order themes in more traditional phenomenological analyses. It was most important to me to have the women's individual voices as well as their shared voices come through in the written descriptions.
5. The final synthesis consisted of gathering the themes that were common to all of the co-researchers. In this step, discussion of the similarities and differences allowed me

to draw tentative conclusions regarding the experience of stripping as a whole—that is, the shared experience. At the same time it was important to acknowledge that individual differences may have reflected important distinctions.

6. At this stage I read and listened to the protocols again searching for the voice of the self, self-in-relation, and the body using procedures similar to those outlined by Gilligan et al. (1990): Reading for self involved considering how the "I" is represented in the protocol or story. The way the woman spoke about herself and the terms of self description and presentation were duly noted. Reading for self-in-relation involved consideration for how the woman described herself in relation to others noting her concerns for attachment, attention, and responsiveness to others. It also involved reading and noting references to care, vulnerability, disconnection, loneliness, and feelings about being loved. Reading for embodied existence included listening for descriptions of the body, care of the body, movement, and the perception of time and space including their feelings as located in their bodies. Statements reflecting these voices were then extracted, collected together, and related to the themes as derived from the individual protocols. These voices provided a framework for interpreting and organizing the discussion.

7. The voices and themes were then woven together into a synthesis that described the overall experience of the night club stripper. The themes were related to the relevant literature for the purposes of discussion and interpretation.

8. Based on the descriptions and discussion I constructed a cognitive science based model of the self structure. These diagrams show the relationship between various elements of the self structure and how this changes with context over time and how the stripper persona relates to the everyday self.

9. The written report was then returned to the co-researchers for validation. They were asked if the report conforms to their understanding of their experience as exotic dancers. At this point further information may be provided which will alter the report by changing the researchers description or by adding information that previous interviews missed.

CHAPTER THREE
STRIPPING FOR A LIVING

There have been eight major studies conducted on female strippers, nude and semi-nude dancers, and table dancers (Anglioli, 1982; Boles, 1973; Carey, Petersen, & Sharpe, 1974; Halpern, 1981; Peretti & O'Connor, 1982; Roanai & Ellis, 1989; Salutin, 1971; Skipper & McCaghy, 1970a). In addition, there has been one book of essays devoted to stripping in Canada (Dragu & Harrison, 1988), a book including interviews with, and essays about exotic dancers (Bell, 1987), a recent book containing interviews with exotic dancers (Keefe, 1993), an autobiography (Ample, 1990), a fictionalized autobiography (Atkinson, 1995), and numerous newspaper articles (e.g., Church, 1990, Staples 1988). A book by Prus and Irini (1980) on the hotel community also includes some information about strippers. This review will focus on the major studies while including information from the other sources where appropriate.

Of the eight major studies only Peretti and O'Connor (1982), and Ronai and Ellis (1989), did not approach their research from the standpoint of the social psychology of deviance. Keefe's (1991) inquiry offers very detailed interviews which suggested a wide range in the subject's psychological makeup.

A. Background Characteristics

The background characteristics of the women who work as exotic entertainers varies widely; they are not a homogenous group (Halpern, 1981). Most dancers come from large urban centers, are young (e.g., in Boles' study the average age was 24.5 years), caucasian, come from blue collar backgrounds, tend to be the eldest child, and are attractive (Boles, 1973). The educational backgrounds of strippers also vary widely across studies. For example, most of the women participating in Skipper and McCaghy's (1969) and Boles' study had completed high school while in Salutin's (1971) study the majority had only a junior high school education. The women in Keefe's (1993) inquiry ranged from high school graduates to those who have post-secondary backgrounds. Skipper and McCaghy found that a large proportion of their sample had married at an early age and divorced soon after (20

out of 24), this finding was not confirmed by Halpern. Skipper and McCaghy's group tended to come from unstable homes where they received little attention or affection (also confirmed by Halpern,1981). Boles found that feature performers tended to come from backgrounds in which at least one family member had show business experience while none of the house girls did.

These findings reveal that studies vary in the composition of their samples and in the local structure of the exotic entertainment business. For example, in some areas table dancing is allowed while in others it is not. In some places there is no such thing as house girls. This makes it difficult for those wishing to make comparisons or to generalize their findings. This also reveals a major problem for researchers operating within the natural science paradigm– specifically few samples are random and the exotic entertainment business shows significant regional variation.

B. Stripping as a Career Choice

Boles (1973) focused on presenting a developmental framework for analyzing the process by which women are recruited, socialized, and committed to stripping. It was suggested that "felt strain", commonly in the form of financial need, a divorce, or a dissatisfaction with one's life, precipitated a persons move into a stripping career. Feature performers who usually had show business experience before they became strippers and were often introduced to stripping by a family member. Alternatively, house girls, were typically employed either as "go-go" girls or as waitresses and were most often recruited by friends. This is consistent with Salutin's (1971) findings that candidates were encouraged mostly by people they knew, other dancers, or their boyfriends. The agents of recruitment stressed such factors as the money, availability of work, and travel, for features as incentives. While money, ease of work, and being able to be at home with family or children were the work incentives stressed by the house girls. Carey, Sharpe, and Petersen (1974) also noted that few career choices were open to strippers who emphasized the importance of a tolerant and supportive atmosphere in their decision to strip. Skipper and McCaghy (1970a) suggested a tendency toward exhibitionistic behavior for gain (also found by Salutin and to a limited extent Keefe) prompted occupational entry. Previous experience in show business

was seen as reflecting exhibitionistic tendencies by both Salutin and Skipper and McCaghy and was not viewed as a desire to be a performer or entertainer, or as indicative of a need for attention. This view however may have reflected the researcher's emphasis on the sociology of deviance.

C. The Self-Image of Strippers

Strippers are well aware of their negative stereotype which portrays them as morally inferior, mixed up girls in need of help, dumb and can't do anything else, take drugs and alcohol dependent, prostitutes, or sexually deviant (Dragu & Harrison, 1988). Most strippers however, either deny the stereotype or feel that it is only partially true (Church, 1990; Dragu & Harrison; Staples, 1988). Ironically, the negative stereotype may serve to provide dancers with a feeling of group cohesion (Prus & Irini, 1980). One dancer commenting on the differences between stripping in Canada and elsewhere revealed...

> I think a lot of the misperception comes from the fact that throughout the world exotic dancing was related to prostitution, and still is in a lot of countries. But in Canada it's not. If you're a prostitute and you're a dancer and the girls find out, they make sure nobody books you. (Staples, 1988).

In Boles' study prostitution was found to be more characteristic of the house girls while the features were strongly opposed to it (Boles, 1973). Prostitution may vary with the type of dancer (i.e., house girls or table dancers), the type of club they work in, as well as regional differences in the nature of the industry. Several of the women in Keefe's inquiry indicated that they derived a strong sense of confidence through erotic dancing. These women felt in control on stage and overall derived satisfaction from performing (Keefe, 1993).

Peretti and O'Connor (1981) attempted to determine the extent to which low or high self discrepancy between perceived and ideal self affected emotional stability. Their findings revealed that dancers with low self discrepancy had fewer emotional problems and felt that their emotional problems were similar to other people. They tended to deal with the patrons' negative views of them and maintain their own more positive self-images by pointing out that their clients were exploitive and hypocritical. They saw themselves as providing a valuable service, and accepted that their role required a certain amount of exploitation.

Women high in self discrepancy indicated that their negative feelings in the areas of self worth and self acceptance are associated with their identity as a stripper. These women had more emotional problems including abased and destructive attitudes towards the self, awkwardness with men, lack of a sustained future occupational role, and felt exploited both financially and sexually. Unfortunately, in grouping or clustering people in this way one loses the individual variation and the individual's story of how they feel about their work.

Though as indicated above strippers vary in the degree to which they are affected by their role , most at some time or another do get defensive about their dancing. Boles (1973) found that dancers coped with the negative views of others by such techniques as neutralization (e.g., commenting on the immorality of others) or by avoiding the reality of some of their behaviors (e.g., dissociating themselves from their nudity). Strippers also identified themselves with other groups with a higher status (e.g., as entertainers) or by emphasizing other roles (e.g., wife or mother). The features, by virtue of their greater past involvement in other aspects of show business (especially other dance forms), identified themselves more as entertainers emphasizing stripping as an art or profession. Boles suggested that features accepted their status more so than housegirls as evidenced by the latter's tendency to hide their identity (termed primary deviance).

Anglioli (1982) investigated the image perception and locus of control of nude and semi-nude dancers. The high school and college dropouts in this sample tended to be more self-accepting than the graduates, possibly using the dancing to validate existing views that they are attractive and demonstrating an internal locus of control. Graduates were not as satisfied with their self image and were seen to be using dancing to counter this low image. Anglioli suggested that the audiences' positive feedback counteracts their low image promoting the development of an external locus of control.

Halpern (1982) used content analysis to analyze interviews with 18 topless and bottomless dancers. Halpern found that most of the women studied had body image problems in childhood and had a history of problems in relating to distant or imposing fathers, some of whom were abusive. Halpern concluded that dancing could be viewed as an effort to enhance body image and to re-enact the approach-avoidance relationship with father figures.

D. Skill and Knowledge Acquisition

How effective a stripper one becomes depends on the individual's mastery of the skills involved, the learning of the ethical code, and the internalizing of an ideology which justifies the appropriateness of the work (Boles & Garbin, 1974a). These skills include such things as being able to dance to appropriate music, to be able to use or develop a gimmick, to sell oneself to audiences, to know how and in what order to strip, and to be able to deal with customers. Skipper and McCaghy (1970a) found that while some of the women had taken dancing lessons, such learning was not essential. Overall, the majority of studies suggested that little formal training, was required to become a stripper (though some women used skills from learned other forms of entertainment or athletic endeavors).

The ethical code implies the importance of expectations related to the organization of the work, maintaining social distance, and being able to relate to other strippers (Boles, 1973). These informal rules and subcultural norms were learned through experience and interaction with other dancers. At times, however, veteran performers would give younger strippers tips on how to conduct themselves. Rules related to work organization were local though most clubs have similar regulations within a province or state.

E. Commitment to Stripping

Boles (1973) suggests three mechanisms by which reference groups bring about occupational commitment; continuance, cohesion, and control. Role models were seen as being responsible for inducing continuance by teaching occupational skills and pointing out the advantages of the occupation to beginners. Here the focus tends to be on extrinsic rewards as opposed to internal rewards (e.g., dancing for pleasure). The author found that strippers did not have a good idea of their career lines possibly because their response to questions about the stages of their careers and how they would direct another dancer were idiosyncratic. This may have reflected a similarly idiosyncratic career history. Role models within the occupation were seen as largely ineffective in promoting continuance. Boles' conclusion was that people continued dancing due to the perceived penalties of leaving rather than because of the perceived advantages for remaining in it. It would also be

important to know what the dancers future outlooks were, a question that appears to not have been examined.

Reference groups are important for inducing group cohesion (Boles, 1973). For features, the reference group was entertainers while for house girls it was the night people's subculture. Neither was seen as being successful in promoting group cohesion. Without a well defined reference group occupational control was not evident. The role of stripper was seen to hinder future prospects; for example of becoming a model or actor. However, Prus and Irini (1980) mention that group cohesion is enhanced by their negative stereotype. This finding was confirmed by the women in Keefe's (1993) study, many of whom felt a sisterhood with their co-workers. These women shared in common views of their work and of their customers which allowed them to support each other.

F. Personal and Working Relationships

McCaghy and Skipper (1969) found that nine strippers from their sample of 35 had engaged in homosexual behavior while they were stripping. The authors suggested that three factors were supportive of this behavior; isolation from affective social relations, unsatisfactory relationships with males, and a context that allows a wide range of behavior. It was not established if this percentage or the reasons given for homosexual contact differed from that in the general population or other occupational groups or contexts where women work together. Other more positive reasons for entering homosexual relationships were not presented. Keefe (1993) also reported that five of the seven women interviewed exhibited homo and bisexual orientations. These women found exotic dancing to enhance potential contacts and their fantasy lives. Five used the stage performance for personal sexual gratification. Most of these women had sex positive attitudes which were exemplified in their performances.

Boles and Garbin (1974b) found that stripper-customer interactions were related to; night club norms, the purpose of the club for owners, and the spatial areas where the interaction occurs. Their findings reveal that house girls, because they are required to mingle and encourage customers to drink, do not have the degree of separation from the audience that strippers in general prefer. This, in turn, may help features to perceive themselves more

certainly as entertainers than the house girls. Cooke (1987), in reference to staged performances, mentions that the men also understand that it is a staged fantasy. It appears that the more closely one interacts with customers and as the entertainment function lessens, the feigning of intimacy becomes more prevalent. This also appears to be related to the complaint that audiences objectify them. In the feigning of intimacy customers are more likely to assume that strippers are available for sexual contact.

Ronai and Ellis (1989), using participant observation and interviews, investigated the interactional strategies of table dancers. They found that table dancers used techniques such as eye contact, special attention, the promise of more intimate contact, and being sincere to encourage customers to buy table dances. By showing personal interest they sold table dances. In return, if customers felt special, they would be more likely to purchase table dances or to offer tips. These women used the stage show as advertising using their talents, provocative gestures and clothing to gain initial interest. The women used eye contact, coming on, doting, and humor to connect with the customer. The customers, however, were more likely to buy if they felt the dancer was being sincere and had dropped her routine. While working the floor these women would enter into negotiation with each party assessing what they were willing to give and how much could be acquired from the other. There was also some consideration for evaluating the likelihood that a customer would become problematic. These women found it difficult to maintain their sincerity in the face of keeping their negative feelings at bay. Nevertheless they would tell the customers stories to keep them interested or lead them to believe that they would consider a date if they would buy a dance. These women also were faced with situations where men would transgress the regulations by touching them inappropriately. In response they would firmly verbalize their displeasure at the transgression while still trying to maintain the connection. If customers persisted they would need to stop the dance. The authors suggest that dancers are validated in this context for displaying characteristics that society values in women. From the dancer's perspective they are doing nothing more than most women do, but are getting money in exchange. They also suggest that the interaction in the bar reflects the power dynamics in mainstream society. As a subordinate group women respond to mens macro-manipulative practices by using their own micro-manipulative techniques in the interpersonal realm. The

authors suggest that economic resources being exchanged for sexual titillation and ego gratification is common in our culture (Ronai & Ellis, 1989).

Problems with abusive customers generally occur in the form of men encroaching into the stage area or by insulting behavior (Boles & Garbin, 1974b). Strippers usually have a number of insults that they use against such people and in the case of those that pose a physical threat may have to defend themselves. D'Andre (1965) notes strippers preference for burlesque theaters where the performer is always on stage since it minimized contact with the audience. Not all interactions with the customers are seen as negative for performers do appreciate applause, particularly from female customers. Strippers' feelings, however, about female customers are ambivalent – while they tend to appreciate their applause more than that from males they also feel that females are jealous of them and they get more upset by the negative behavior of females in the audience (Boles, 1973). Most of the women in Keefe's (1993) study, however, viewed dancing for female customers as a positive experience.

Keefe (1993) through detailed interviews provides a wealth of information on how the women in the study related to their customers. These women who worked behind plexiglass in a theater setting demonstrated a wide variety of attitudes towards men. Some of them liked some of their customers seeing them as curious, playful, admiring, and adoring, but others disliked the men intensely-seeing them as being like "stray dogs". All of these women felt the importance of being in control and disliked it when men tried to control them through their demands. This tended to be seen as a sign of disrespect. Several of the women were intrigued by the mens sexual behaviors and at times shared in their fantasies. These women were very open about the sexual display of their body and would accommodate their customers requests in most instances. Simply they were willing to play along with the fantasy. Generally these women saw their work as a place where men can engage in their fantasies without fear of being ostracized. If men were being abusive they would tend to either move away, assert themselves verbally by voicing their displeasure, or seek management's aid in getting the offender removed. Several of these women were active in sexual education activities outside the theater and saw their jobs as an opportunity to continue their work.

One unique finding in Keefe's (1993) study was that many of the women saw their work as healing for themselves and more commonly for the customers. The following statements speak to this issue: "It's profoundly healing for some women, me included, to take charge of their own eroticism in such a public way. ... I've learned to be sexually spontaneous in a way that I never was before." (Keefe, 1993, p.8). This was experienced as empowering:

> The fact that we don't have to take bad behavior and bad attitude from customers, like in some other sex purveying places, is empowering. ... And the level of trust that I feel like I can acquire with a stranger around intimate, charged topics ... It gives me a leg up on my interactions with other people" (Keefe, p. 21).

Some saw their work as a way to explore sides of their person through playing with their persona. Vulnerability was also noted:

> We are very vulnerable with each other, naked in front of each other. I think it's very healing to be exposed in that way and to discover that those stretch marks, or that flab, or that cellulite, or those zits, or that scar doesn't change other people's a ...acceptance. (p. 329).

Most of the women agreed that it promoted healing in their customers:

> I think it's healing for the customers to see women free. Men are more comfortable with their sexual needs , more casual and affirmative of their sexual drive. It's very healthy for them so see women who are that way, too, even if its just a temporary fantasy. (p. 329).

One of the women Keefe interviewed felt great ambivalence in her work generally viewing the customers with revulsion. Generally, she was openly abusive towards them while at the same time recognizing that a few were "totally cool". This woman favored female customers and saw them as "full of admiration, they look at everyone in a very respectful way, watching how they move, like they're watching a ballet... Women are definitely cooler. There are no demands, no expectations." (p. 86).

Halpern (1981) found that dancers tended to come from backgrounds of impoverished family life that were lacking in attention and affection (also supported by Carey , Petersen, and Sharpe, 1974; Salutin, 1971; Skipper & McCaghy, 1970b). Fathers

in particular tended to be distant, overly strict or abusive. In contrast half of her sample stated that their relationships with their mothers were good. She mentions that independence issues were a major concern for these dancers. Perhaps this is related to the idea that dancers are used to taking care of themselves (Ronai & Ellis, 1989).

G. Summary

As described the majority of studies conducted on exotic dancers have been from the standpoint of the social psychology of deviance. The result has been descriptions of dancers. These descriptions often pre-define them as deviants resulting in static portrayals which ignore the dynamic nature of their experiences. Thus the result is stiff caricatures (Ronai & Ellis, 1989). In a similar vein, explanations of stripper behavior couched in the language of the psychology of deviance seemingly contributes to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Further, many of the studies to date using survey techniques have provided descriptions of the characteristics of dancers as a group while losing the experiences of the individual dancer in the process. To increase our understanding of the dancer's life-world will require research that moves beyond this theoretical approach. With the exception of the study by Ronai and Ellis (1989) we have very few descriptions of the lived experiences of dancers. It is interesting that this and the study by Prus and Irini (1980), indicate the ways in which strippers are similar to other groups in mainstream society, while in contrast most other studies focused on the differences and deviance. (The non-academic, but nevertheless invaluable works by Dragu and Harrison (1988), and Keefe (1993) share this perspective)

The current study will attempt to provide descriptions of stripper's experiences from the standpoint of the stripper. Instead of merely describing an individuals characteristics I will attempt to provide a description of processes as part of the life-world of the stripper. In doing so I will be using a hermeneutical approach which I believe is most suited to answer questions dealing with peoples' life-worlds.

CHAPTER FOUR
POSTMODERNISM, NARRATIVE PSYCHOLOGY, AND IDENTITY FORMATION

A. Rationale: A Search For Patterns Which Connect

> The pattern which connects is a metapattern. (Bateson, 1979, p.12).

The theories discussed in the following two chapters were selected over the course of the writing of this dissertation. There was no firm criteria used in their selection, but their inclusion reflects the recursive nature of the research process. My initial experiences with these women resulted in my reading a wide sample of the feminist literature on women's development. As my work progressed and the interviews were nearly completed I began to see certain patterns in their descriptions which prompted me to read further into women's development and identity formation. Theories consonant with a postmodern perspective were chosen as a result of reading the work of Gilligan and her colleagues as I found the idea of different voices to be consistent with the pattern I was seeing in the protocols (See Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan & Brown, 1990). They indicated to me the possibility that the women in this study possessed personality structures which shifted with context. This seemed to be consistent with the views put forth by the Gergen and Gergen (1988), Bruner (1986, 1990), and the contemporary identity theorists among others.My background in cognitive science led me to note certain connections with the work of the postmodern theorists and the contemporary theorists of identity formation. My background in athletics and previous reading in the area of artistic experience (and in particular dance) led to my examination of the literature related to lived bodily experience and the phenomenology of dance. Thus, the theories discussed in the following two chapters were not selected randomly, but reflected a movement alternating between my previous reading and the findings. As I began to construct the individual portraits and the literature on dance, my cognitive science background came to the forefront of my thinking and helped me to think further about what kind of model may best represent the experiences of these women.

Finally, I would like to add that in addition to theoretical work I read a great deal of

literature and poetry, and listened to many contemporary female musicians whose work greatly enriched my understanding of the experiences of these women as well as of women's psychology in general. The voices of the following artists, in no particular order were particularly important to this aspect of my process: Margaret Atwood, Karen Connelly, Tori Amos, Mae Moore, Jane Siberry, Anais Nin, Virginia Woolf, Jeanette Winterson, Sylvie Guillem, Gelsey Kirkland, Tamara Karsavina, Toni Bentley, Joan Brady, Rebecca Goldstein, Diana Atkinson, Sappho, Ursula Le Guin, Annie Ernaux, Carolyn Kizer, Nina Berberova, Michael Ondaatje, Di Brandt, Annie Dillard, Lorna Crozier, Amy Gerstler, Louise Gluck, Helene Le Beau, Joanna Russ, Zimmer Bradley, Laurie Anderson, and Adrienne Rich.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first introduces a shift in thinking from what is known as the modern era to the postmodern. This shift in thinking, current in areas of study such as philosophy, sociology, economics, media and cultural studies, and literary criticism has influenced the way we think about the self from the standpoint of psychological theorizing. It is not my claim that these theories fully conform to the postmodern philosophy but rather that postmodernism, in its critical role, is consistent with several important trends in current theorizing about the self. The second section will deal with several theoretical positions that are consistent with postmodern criticism and a constructionist outlook. Finally I will examine the literature on identity formation.

B. The Postmodern Divide

The modern era, according to Gergen (1992), was a time when order, progress, reason, prediction and control were the primary sources of moral and intellectual authority. In the modern era objective knowledge and the pursuit of truth was the key to unlocking the door to the unknown. The central elements in this era, the domination of nature, the primacy of method, and the sovereignty of the individual, had their origins in the teachings of Bacon, Descartes, and Locke. These goals were fueled by the rapid developments in technological progress and economic thought (Borgman, 1992). Since the latter part of the nineteenth century up to the present day these concerns have had wide influence on social and psychological theorizing and the way we have come to think about the self. Two ideas are particularly important in this respect: universalism, the idea that human psychological

experience and development are structured in particular ways independent of time and culture; and individualism, the idea of a central, controlling, core self. These ideas have skewed the view of our experience in ways that have resulted in the marginalization and ignorance of other ways of being, whether they be of non-dominant groups in our own culture (e.g., women, natives) or people in other cultures (Borgman, 1992). Gergen (1992) points out that postmodernism is not so much against other views but their claim to a universally validating voice.

In the modern era values relating to the importance of maintaining the family and its relationships as well as a sense of community were to somehow co-exist with the idea of the self-reliant man – the heroic individual overcoming all hardships placed in his way. It was as if one could have it all without any spiritual cost. Cultures, both native and white, became increasingly fragmented while maintaining a facade that all is well (Borgman, 1992). In their monumental book, The Habits of the Heart, Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985) reveal that even for white middle-class Americans a growing despondency threatened the idealism of the modern era.

Gergen (1992) finds it ironic that the critical force behind the postmodernist critique of modernism is technology and science, particularly in the form of communication technologies such as the automobile, telephone, fax, television, computer, and airplane. These technologies have loosened traditional ties to family and friends immersing one in a multitude of new and possible relations in the vastness of the electronic networks. As Gergen (1992 so aptly states "we have become immersed in the other." (p.52) This increasing connectivity can be disorienting, resulting in the feeling that one is being pulled apart and populated by a number of other selves and voices. It may also result in an increasing awareness of the multi-perspectival nature of the world.

While this multiplicity of perspectives may be exciting it is also confusing, for in the past, experts could be relied upon to furnish the truth and we could feel secure that the decisions we made were based on the best information. Today we are faced with a multiplicity of truths each of which is backed by a group professing to be right. In a world where each community, political party, social class or individual has their own perspective the idea of universal truth becomes questionable (Gergen; 1992, 1994).

In the postmodern view one's construction of the world is a function of one's relationships thus "I am only an I by virtue of a relationship" (Gergen, 1992; p. 56). Our psyche, dynamics, conscious and unconscious functioning, and cognitive processes can be seen as the product of cultural values and rituals expressing themselves through language games peculiar to our culture and times. In this view the self becomes "a byproduct of the western way of putting things" (p. 56). One is not a singular unitary self but rather a local manifestation of a network of relationships. In the postmodern view the self-other distinction becomes blurred (Gergen, 1992).

C. Postmodernism, Narrative Psychology, and Self

> A dialectical theory emphasizes contradictions and their synchronizations in short and long-term development both in the individual and in society. (Riegel, 1986, p. 689).

Bruner (1986, 1990) has recently suggested that there are two distinct modes of cognitive functioning, not reducible to each other, with unique ways of construing reality. Both of these forms can be used to formulate convincing arguments though how they do so differs. The narrative mode produces stories that are convincing due their life-likeness. In the paradigmatic mode arguments are convincing because they point to establishing the verifiable truth of a matter. Bruner, reiterating a point Rorty (1979) has made, suggests that traditionally we have been preoccupied with the epistemological question of how to know the truth as opposed to the question of how experience comes to be endowed with meaning (Bruner, 1986). Bruner has further suggested that cognitive science has been particularly guilty of ignoring the importance of meaning. He states that meaning making was the central conception the agenda of the cognitive revolution. In contemporary cognitive science, however, mind as a meaning making process, has been given relatively short shrift (Bruner, 1990). In many respects what Bruner has called for is consistent with what many others in the human sciences have been suggesting for some time (e.g., Giorgi, Colaizzi). This movement, which has been gaining momentum in recent years, is seen by those in traditional science as threatening and in particular any form of theorizing conducted under the rubrics

of postmodernism or constructivism (Good, 1993; Nicholson, 1993; Smith, 1994).

Bruner (1990) suggests that the self has had a particularly checkered history in psychology. It has gone through many transformations following the trends in psychological theorizing from essentialist notions based on introspection at the beginning of the century to the conceptual self, measured and defined through standard testing procedures, which was emphasized at mid-century. Bruner notes that the promising line of work on the transactional self was quickly abandoned to reappear decades later in the form of the contextualism that was already active in anthropology and sociology. Part of the problem that psychology had with its concepts, and in abandoning promising lines of inquiry, was due to the tendency of theorists in psychology to insulate themselves from other areas of study.

Recent work has acknowledged that coming to know something is both situated and distributed – our knowledge is not just in our head but in the textbooks, computers, and libraries we know how to use (Brown, Collins, & Duguid; 1989). In this view knowledge acquisition is a cultural event. With respect to theorizing about the self Bruner poses the question "Is the self to be taken as an enduring, subjective, nucleus, or might it too be better conceived as 'distributed'?" (Bruner, 1990; p.107). By this Bruner suggests that self is not only located in ones private consciousness but also in a cultural and historical situation.

Guisinger and Blatt (1994) suggest that in the West, psychological theorists have given greater emphasis and importance to individualism over interpersonal relations. The mature personality is seen as a function of autonomy and identity. This is in contrast with the views of women in our culture, certain minority groups, and people from other cultures who give greater weight to the importance of relatedness. Cushman (1990) has noted that the Western notion of self has two components; a self contained individualism as well as an emptiness. Hermans, Kempen, and van Loon (1992) make a similar point stressing that the Western ethnocentric views of self have focused on individualism and rationalism while neglecting its relational aspects.

A number of recent theories have attempted to redress these concerns. Hermans et al. (1992) argue from a constructivist perspective proposing that self is dialogical, transcending both rationalism and individualism. The authors suggest that the self is spatially organized, embodied, and social , with the "other" included in the self structure.

They suggest that the self, moving through space and time, can imaginatively occupy a number of positions allowing for a number of dialogically interacting selves. Here the self is defined as a dynamic multiplicity of "I" positions, able to move in mental space, in accord with changes in context and time. Each of the "I" positions can have its own voice allowing for relations between them. The net result is a complex, structured, narrative self. The authors use the analogy of interacting characters in a story, acknowledging the influence of Bakhtin (1973) to their work. The self is seen as flexible, it can incorporate aspects of another into the self structure allowing for a new perspective. Bruner (1990) has also noted that selves can be distributed interpersonally and derive their meaning from historical contexts, shaping cultural values which in turn serve to order as well as constrain the self structure. What is not clear in their theorizing is the possibility that the embodied aspect of self may also be subject to the same process of creating multiple perspectives.

Bruner (1990) has recently posited a Cultural psychology which focuses upon the "meanings in terms of which self is defined both by the individual and the culture in which her or she participates" and to "the practices in which the meanings of self are achieved and put to use." (p. 116). In effect, and as noted previously, he is calling for a more distributed view of self. With respect to a culture's definition of self Bruner suggests that one needs to consider a historical dimension – the self from the past to the present. For example, Taylor (1989) has noted the influence of our culture's moral development and religious history to our notions of self. Our society and its structures, institutions, economy, language, are all historical and traditional realities which affect the way in which we have come to define and understand the self (Bruner, 1990). Here, self operates in various contexts to achieve varied goals. In a larger sense Bruner suggests that concepts, in a cultural psychology, should be defined in terms of their use.

Bruner's (1990) notion of a cultural psychology emphasizes interpretational processes, contending that human experiences and their meanings are to a large extent organized in narrative form. The expression of self in narrative has both cultural and local constraints. These narratives can be seen as versions of reality governed by cultural conventions and narrative necessity. Narrative as a process of mind is actively involved in particular constructions of reality.

Bruner (1991) sees ten features of narrative relating to their construction:

1. Narratives are accounts of experience in time similar to Ricouer's notion of human time.
2. Particular events seem to be the core of narrative and these events relate to certain generic forms.
3. Narratives result in one presuming another's intentional states which are not predictable due to the element of freedom and choice.
4. Hermeneutic composibility is particularly important when a rational determinant of the truth of an interpretation is lacking and empirical verification is problematic. There is an interrelationship between the meaning of part of an account to its whole in which, during the construction of the event, one selects and emphasizes particulars including those in the realm of memory and fantasy. Interpretations involve the intentional attributions and presuppositions of both the teller and the told.
5. There are certain cultural canons constraining narratives and their breaching adds drama to a story.
6. Narrative truth is reflected in verisimilitude not verifiability.
7. Genres guide the way narratives are told through language.
8. Normativeness relates to the importance of cultural legitimacy and breaches of norms.
9. In listening to stories ones background influences how and what one hears.
10. Narrative accounts are accrued into autobiographical forms centered in one's self-narratives reflecting self-understanding in action. Bruner (1990) makes the important point that individual autobiographies while they may be consistent with cultural forms may also deviate from them.

Nelson (1993) provides an analysis of the development and emergence of an autobiographical memory in support of Bruner's position that a narrative mode is an inherent to being. The work suggests that autobiographical memory develops in parallel with languages representational function. Children gradually learn how to talk about memories with others and to construct their own memories as narratives. Nelson points to a reinstatement function by which one learns to use anothers verbal representations and

incorporate them into ones self-structure. Thus, autobiographical memory becomes central to one's definition of self. Dunn (1988) has found that in children the negotiation of narrative versions are embedded in their social transactions. They are necessary to social and personal understanding and are seen as fundamental to human development.

Gergen's (1991) adoption of an interpretivist, constructivist, and distributed view of self emerges from his earlier work on the self. In his earlier work Gergen noted that people's self-esteem and self-concept changes in reaction to the kinds of people one associates with and their responses to positive or negative remarks. Thus the self, as a product of its situatedness in various contexts, cannot be counted upon to be transhistorically reliable. Gergen sees two general processes, reflexivity and the ability to envision alternatives, as orienting us towards our culture and past. Reflexivity allows us to alter present meanings in the light of the past and to alter past interpretations in the light of new occurrences. Our ability to envision alternatives allows us to take on other ways of being and acting. Cultures provide us with a range of potential ways of being that exist between stability and change.

Gergen (1991) has suggested that in the postmodern world the self lacks coherence and is in a process of evolving social construction. This view of self can be construed as possessing multiple centers of coherence to be brought into play as circumstances dictate. Each self may have its own well formed identity including the possibility of having conflicting values. At the extreme one can be in a "multi-phrenic condition" in which the selves are fragmented and lacking coherence.

It has been suggested that, given the propensity to sequence events, an individuals understanding of the self is inextricably linked with their personal history (Gergen & Gergen, 1988). The term self-narrative is invoked to describe the person's account of relationships between events over time. Thus, Gergen and Gergen suggest that rather than seeing life as "one damned thing after another" one attempts to establish personal coherence among life's experiences. The process renders events intelligible so that our present identity is "not a sudden and mysterious event, but a sensible result of a life story" (Gergen & Gergen, 1988; p. 19).

Narratives can be viewed as properties of social discourse (Gergen & Gergen, 1988). They are social constructions which are constantly being revised as interactions proceed.

They are constructed and employed in social relations. There are several points that the authors highlight that are essential to construct narratives that are inælligible; they must establish a valued endpoint, select events relevant to a particular goal state, order events, establish causal linkages between them, and contain signs as to their beginning and end. The authors note that there are a number of narrative forms which relate to the potential forms of self. These include stability narratives in which the subject remains essentially unchanged, and progressive and regressive narratives which suggest the directions that evaluative processes move towards. Other forms borrowed from literary theory include tragedy, comedy, and romance. The authors suggest that dramatic moments may serve to be most revealing of a person's identity. The authors cite Maslow's notion of self-actualizing experiences as identity markers.

With respect to the truth of narrative accounts (Gergen & Gergen, 1988) suggest that such a search may lead one into an infinite regress. They reiterate a point made by hermeneutic theorists that there is no single privileged point of view from which to determine the real truth. They also make the point that narratives may be nested within each other. This raises the question of coherence. Individuals have the capacity to incorporate a number of narrative forms due in part to the demands of a given social environment. Thus narrative constructions can be viewed as linguistic tools with important social functions. For instance when wanting to make a good impression on someone it is usual to present oneself in a stable narrative to help others to perceive our characteristics as stable. The authors present the possibility that one, instead of achieving a true self, develops the capacity to understand and present oneself as stable to others.

Narratives are immersed in ongoing discourses, they are embedded socially. As experiences change so do the narratives one constructs. There is an element of social negotiation in which meanings are constructed in a reciprocal process which serves to enhance intelligibility (Gergen & Gergen, 1988).

Gergen and Gergen (1988) emphasize that just as narrative accounts are a product of social relations so too are lived narratives. The moment to moment meanings of lived experience are derived from their embeddedness in relations. In this view, the experience of emotion can be viewed as a temporary social role influenced by cognitive evaluation and

its social embeddedness. It is a cognitive and physiological pattern of being which emerges to fit context and action Curiously this view may also be in agreement with the idea of emergent behavior in complex systems.

> If we want to change our lives we need to change our patterns of discourse. (Gergen,1990, p. 141).

It has been recently suggested that traditional views of narrative, such as mentioned previously, may in fact be forms that limit the scope of meanings that interpret a life (Gergen & Gergen, 1988). In their stead, Gergen (1990) suggests that it would be prudent to examine how lives can be retold through other structures and story forms including those not commonly recognized as being proper narratives. Gergen suggests that "womenstories" have been excised from the literature because their narratives do not fit traditional forms – theirs are "more fragmentary, multidimensional, understated, and temporally disjunctive" and they have been rated as insignificant (Gergen, 1990, p.132). The result may be constraints imposed developing on selves other than those subscribing to culturally genderized forms. In this examination of autobiographies Gergen has discovered contrasts between the stories of men and those of women: Men emphasize careers, competitive striving, and goals. They are quest driven with their voices projecting authority, domination, and aggression saying little about their family relationships (see a reflection of these qualities in the study by Levinson, 1978). In contrast, women focus on relationship and the dilemmas accruing from trying to balance family concerns and careers. Their voices reflect a co-operative stance in their attempts to integrate their goals with others around them.

D. Integration, Differentiation, and Complexity

> The spirit is never at rest but always engaged in ever progressive motion, in giving itself new form. (Hegel).

Csikszentmihalyi , Rathunde, and Wilson (1993) have borrowed the concepts of integration, differentiation, and complexity from systems theory and incorporated them into

their examination of gifted teenagers, their families, and the process of flow. Common to all levels of analysis is the association of differentiation with the notion of change or adaptability, and integration with cohesion or stability. The authors view optimal systems as those that can be characterized as complex, incorporating both integration and differentiation. They are viewed as cohesive and stable and yet able to adapt and change when required. A system can be defined as integrated when the individual parts work together and are mutually reinforcing. A differentiated system on the other hand emphasizes the unique or specialized functions of its parts.

With respect to family structure the authors view integrated families as stable, mutually supportive, and consistent (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993). Differentiated families encourage individuals to seek new challenges and opportunities. When these two forces are in balance families are seen to be complex allowing for an environment that is both supportive and allowing for its members to develop their uniqueness. If the two forces are not in balance the possibility of over- differentiation and over-integration may occur. A family structure that develops neither order nor variety in relationships is seen as simple. In their investigation of family structures, family integration was found to be composed of two sub-factors; support, in which members were given attention and felt empathic concern, and harmony, in which the home was ordered with clear rules and consistent behavior. Differentiation was composed of involvement, where the family encouraged individual achievement and intensity, as well as freedom, in which individuals have the time and privacy to develop.

From the perspective of the theory of Csikszentmihalyi's et al. (1993), contexts may also be viewed as differentiated, integrated, or complex. Complex environments are seen to develop complex, or autotelic personalities. These individuals can be characterized as seeking stimulation and challenge in boring contexts and will respond to ones that provoke anxiety by working on new skills. Contexts that are integrated provide individuals with a feeling of support and consistency while ones that are differentiated encourage individual development by seeking new challenges and opportunities. Thus, these views suggest a mutually reinforcing pattern of interaction between individual and context.

Individuals are considered to be differentiated to the extent that they have many

different abilities, characteristics, and goals. They are integrated to the extent to which harmony exists between various goals, thoughts, feelings, and actions (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). Feelings of freedom, choice, and creativity are related to the degree that differentiation is exhibited. Feelings of internal harmony and connectedness to others reflect integration. The author suggests that for optimal development, both co-exist and operate together to produce a complex self system with both operating to the individual's benefit. These views are consistent with the views of others who have examined similar processes in terms of identity development (e.g., Marcia, 1980). It is interesting that Kegan (1982) offered a similar view positing that these two forces were in tension and operated successively to move an individual towards greater levels of development.

E. Research on Self-Identity Development

In this section I will briefly describe the work of two developmental theorists, Erikson and Marcia, whose work has formed the basis for much of the contemporary theorizing and criticism relating to the development of the self. Recent developments along these theoretical lines as well as constructivist theories consonant with research on identity formation will also be considered before I turn attention to theories which focus on women's development.

Erikson's Stage Theory

Erikson (1950, 1968) developed a psycho-social stage theory of human development covering the human life span. Its central dictum is the epigenetic principal in which development unfolds in a particular sequence with each stage depending upon the previous one. Erikson's idea was that at each stage contained a crisis, defined as a necessary turning point whose resolution prepares one for the subsequent stage. Further, it was the social environment that determined whether the resolution was positive or negative. If the outcome was positive the ego would be strengthened and the individual stood a greater chance of resolving the crisis of the following stage. However, since movement was possible between the poles one could experience varying degrees of conflict resolution and it was assumed that parts of each theme were carried into the subsequent stages, an aspect of the theory which received too little attention.

Much of Erikson's work focused on identity and the concept of identity crisis. While convinced that identity developed over a lifetime, particular attention was paid to its development during adolescence in the stage called identity versus role confusion. Here, a period characterized by a psychosocial moratorium, one experimented with roles, searching for an identity which would be an appropriate role in adulthood. If one did not do so it would result in role confusion or the acquisition of a negative identity.

Erikson suggests that a woman's development was pre-determined by her biological structure defining an "inner space" in which she was destined to bear the offspring of a chosen man and to take care of the offspring. Thus, her personality is pre-determined and furthermore much of a young woman's identity is already defined by her attractiveness and the choosing of a mate. In his view this occurs as she relinquishes the care of the family of origin and replaces this with the love of a suitable stranger. As noted by feminist scholars Erikson's theory provides a limited view of the development of women and in fact, since the majority of his data was obtained from boys and men, it speaks more to the development of men (Caplan, 1979; Penfold & Walker, 1988). Caplan criticized Erikson's experiment about the play configurations of pre-adolescents used as the basis for his theory of inner space. Caplan suggests that he ignored the more parsimonious explanation of sex differences in socialization, made interpretive leaps in suggesting that these differences pervaded the life span, and evidences faulting thinking in suggesting that the anatomy of the genitals conformed to the structures built. In addition, there were a number of statistical and methodological problems in relation to his conclusions. Penfold and Walker suggested that while his theory was meant to include psychosocial influences, with respect to women he overemphasizes the importance of biological factors. Thus, women who choose work other than that involved in nurturing and caring are going against their destiny.

While agreeing with these criticisms Patterson, Sochting, and Marcia (1992) noted that, paradoxically, Erikson's notion of women's identity as "the individuals construction of the experience of womanhood, of living in a woman's body and of living with the gender based role prescriptions and proscriptions of her culture" (p. 12), was sympathetic to their struggle to define and retain control of their reproductive power within patriarchal culture.

Identity Status Research

Marcia (1966, 1980) proposed the identity status approach to study the identity formation process, expanding upon Erikson's formulation of identity development. Marcia defined four statuses (identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement) occupying positions along the dimensions of commitment and exploration. The statuses are both the products of identity formation as well as structures of the personality. Each exemplifies a primary mode of experience. They are seen as being active in shaping future identities as well as in the passage through subsequent life stages (Patterson, et al.,1992).

In identity diffusion, commitment is neither to a coherent set of values and beliefs, nor is one actively exploring options. These people tend to be viewed as drifting or carefree and often experience concomitant feelings of dissatisfaction or emptiness. Foreclosed individuals are those who have made an early commitment in domains significant to their life with a minimum of exploration. Often these individual were seen as over identifying with respected authority figures. They may have closed off their options prematurely and experience regret or misgivings later on. Moratorium youth were actively exploring roles and domains but have not yet committed themselves. They may experience curiosity, confusion, or anxiety as they struggle with decisions about life choices (Patterson, et al., 1992). This style, emphasizing exploration, is seen to be a more viable path to identity achievement than the foreclosure status. The identity achieved individuals are seen as those who have generally explored many options before committing themselves to their chosen identity. They are more likely to experience feelings of fulfillment and personal worth and they are seen as being more flexible than those in the foreclosure status.

Marcia (1980) later noted the importance of parental support, sense of industry, and the ability to self-reflect as factors predictive of later identity achievement. These factors dove tail with the work of Csikszentmihalyi and colleagues on "flow", as an aspect of the development of complex personality structure. As noted before, the processes of differentiation and integration were both critical for complexity to develop. Similarly, children raised in complex families, that is those which allowed for exploration and provided support, were more likely to develop individuals who experienced flow – people who are sensitive to their potentials and are able to invest resources to their development. Waterman

(1993) has made similar observations with the inclusion of personal expressiveness as a complementary factor in identity formation to Marcia's processes of commitment and exploration. Personal expressiveness, however, is seen as distinct from notion of Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993) that it is an inherent potential with a biological basis. Waterman emphasizes the intuitive "it feels right" aspect as a signifier of identity choices.

Research has tended to support a gender split in content domains with career, religion, and ideology as seen as male and defined as intrapersonal. Sex roles and sexuality were seen as female oriented, defined as interpersonal (Patterson, Sochting, & Marcia, 1992). Archer (1992) has argued that the labelling of certain domains as intra-personal and others as interpersonal does not afford a useful theoretical distinction since, for instance, it is difficult to understand why religion is considered to be intrapersonal since many people speak of their relationship with the Lord. Another example is Josselson's findings that for women ideology is "fundamentally interpersonal" (1988, p. 191). This is particularly relevant given Gilligan's (1982) demonstration of the importance of both types of concerns for both of the sexes. Thus men tended to separate the career and family life domains, while women tended to discuss them in terms of their interconnectedness. It has also been noted that men tend to show a linear sequence in their stages of identity development while for women development tends to be more variable (Patterson, Sochting, & Marcia, 1992). These findings are paralleled by those of Gergen (1990) as noted above in studies of autobiographies. Further, Archer (1992) criticizes the global status score as misrepresenting the way in which people make decisions since "a majority of individuals do not base their decisions on the same identity mode in all domains"(p. 34).

Phinney (1993) also raises a similar concern suggesting that given that adolescents today have multiple reference groups, it is difficult to conceive how they could integrate them into the one coherent sense of self assumed in an achieved identity status. In this respect the possibility is raised of different identity statuses in different domains. It may also be the case that some people may be able to encapsulate their various identities from each other minimizing conflict while others may be more tolerant of ambiguity. Certainly as Phinney notes there are theories of development (e.g., Riegel, 1976) which allow for

ambiguity as a demonstration of human complexity. Further examples include Kegan (1982) who suggests, as does Csikszentmihalyi (1990) that the process of differentiation and integration complement each other to produce more complex personalities. Marcia has recently acknowledged such concerns stating "what I have done is impose the organization on the person rather than to ask the person if there is an organization" (Archer, 1993; p. 93).

Josselson (1988) originally interviewed a number of college women using Marcia's identity statuses and then interviewed them again in a follow up 12 years later. For women interconnectedness was found to be a central concern for the formation of their identity. For women success in careers is often related to their attachments and that success in relating is a measure of their sense of agency and assertion. Thus in part, a woman's self perception is a function of her meaning for others. For Josselson then, the issue of individuation and separation for women is within a context of relatedness. This is not taken to imply that women need be more dependent. The women who were in the identity achievement status preferred to be connected; experiencing support with the sense of self-validation that entails and with the realization that they are able to take care of themselves emotionally. These women were comfortable with risk taking and appreciating the individuality of both themselves and their partners. This is in contrast to women in the foreclosure status who desired the satisfaction of dependency needs. The emphasis here was on feelings of security much like they felt in their family of origin. The finding that women's identity tends to strengthen as their ties to their children lessen is a challenge to Erikson's belief that women's sense of identity is strongest in their roles as wife and mother (Patterson, Sochting, & Marcia, 1992). Thus in their definition of identity Patterson, Sochting, and Marcia stress that it is not enough to simply add a dimension of interpersonal relatedness, but that relatedness is central to the process of identity formation and therefore to its meaning as well.

> Identity then is a dynamic fitting together of parts of the personality with the realities of the social world so that a person has a sense both of internal coherence and meaningful relatedness to the real world. (Josselson, 1988; p. 12-13).

Grotevant (1992) is concerned with the issue of how different domains relate to each

other over time. Here it is useful to consider that there are assigned and chosen aspects in the process of forming a self. This may vary as a function of how compartmentalized identity components are. For example it has been found that men in general try to separate career issues from relational ones while women see them as related. Thus, assigned or inherent components may constrain development in particular domains. In addition, identity may be organized around certain themes at certain life points with other aspects subordinate to the "master theme". In this respect the narrative aspect of identity may serve a coherence for the presentation of self to others and to understanding oneself over time. Here Josselson's (1988) comment is relevant; that theories of self and relationship must be interwoven. In addition, Kroeger's (1993) notion that identity organizes itself around a dynamic tension between self and relationship is in accord with the discussed views. Grotevant (1992), rightly in my opinion, is calling for research to address the issue of the relationships among domains and their implications for the self formation process.

Kroeger (1993) believes that there has been a lack of attention paid by developmental theorists to the transition processes between stages or statuses. Precious little is known about the continuous process of structural change. This article addresses this issue through the examination of one case history to examine the intrapsychic, interpersonal, and contextual factors associated with identity formation. Three questions are asked: (1) what are the intrapsychic characteristics of structural transformation in the identity formation process, (2) what are the subjective experiences of this structural transformation, and (3) what are environmental characteristics that may be associated with such structural change?

The woman in Kroeger's (1993) study was first identified as a foreclosure. During the telling of her story the woman's voice was passive, mirroring her lack of agency during her early adult years. She had doubts about the wisdom of marrying but nevertheless she did while suppressing an inner voice that was telling her to be a person first. Eventually she was able to confront her husband about her dissatisfactions with her life, to move out, get a job, and begin to change. It was both her sense of readiness and being able to confront conflict that allowed this change to occur. She received support in her decision from her doctor which served to validate her decision. This fostered the addition of vocational elements into her changing identity structure. In pursuing her own desires she was able to confront both

her guilt and her fear. Her religious beliefs also were in upheaval and she felt sadness in leaving behind these beliefs which had provided her with feelings of security. She may have been alone, but felt a growing satisfaction in her interpersonal life. Archer (1993) commenting on Kroeger's work, rather than asking which is the real, correct, or accurate story, was more interested in people's perceptions and how their perceptions about the unfolding of their lives change. Specifically Archer wonders what are the complexity of factors leading to change?

F. A Constructivist Model of Self Formation

Viney (1992) has proposed a scaffolding for the creation of a constructivist model of adult development based on Kelly's personal construct psychology. Viney states,

> What remains unique to a constructivist theory are the bipolar constructs that provide a series of twin forks for the developmental path, the emotional signs of the need to change ones construing, and the concept of narrative in which each of us can be the teller of our own life stories" (p. 71).

The underlying assumptions of this model include; (a) an ontological aspect where the developing reality is construed and thus variable providing for multi-perspectival understandings, (b) an epistemological aspect where thought and emotion are seen as complementary ways of knowing operating throughout the lifespan, and (c) the idea that development occurs through the refinement of mental representations.

Viney (1992) bases the model on a system of constructs that are changeable in that they possess a permeability. Change is signalled by unpleasant emotional experiences which are engendered by the invalidation of a construct system. This often occurs during transition periods. Such change may be promoted through agency. By adjusting one's construing through progressive loosening and tightening new constructs may be formed, or changes in the application of old ones may occur. Over time, some constructs are abandoned while others more useful in accomplishing developmental tasks are adopted in accord with the validation or invalidation of an individuals construct system by others. People develop through major events in their lives which others may perceive as crises while the individual sees them as a transition. During transitions changes in behavior and construing are required,

fostered by the invalidation of present construing. People create stories about their lives that serve to provide the self with coherence and meaning for the presentation of self in relationship. Self development is a dialectical process both the result of and an influence on ones relationships.

Consistent with the personal construct psychology of Kelly (1955), and the framework provided by Viney (1992), Berzhonsky (1993) has developed the idea of self as theory and theorist. Berzhonsky's model also parallels the work of William James (1890) who first noted a distinction between the self as knower and the self as object in which self is both a process that does something and a product that is something. Berzhonsky notes that Kelly's personal construct psychology functions as a basis for "exploring how adults construe and make sense of the flux of events and transitions in their lives" (Berzhonsky, 1993; p. 76). The sense of self can be conceived of as a self-generated theory of self. "It is a conceptual structure composed of postulates, assumptions, and constructs relevant to the self interacting in the world" (Berzhonsky, 1993;p.76). This does not imply, however, a correspondence theory of truth in which there is a true identity, or that one necessarily is fully conscious of the self constructing process. Berzhonsky accepts Mahoney's (1991) distinction between critical constructivism (in which we assume that we live within an objective reality though we have no way of knowing it directly– implying that our understanding of "reality" is mediated by our construct systems) and radical constructivism (where we deny the existence of an objective ontological reality). Berzhonsky favors a critical constructivist perspective where one is seen as constructing both who one thinks one is, and a version of the "reality" in which one operates and lives.

The theory originates in the idea presented by Kuhn (1970) and Lakatos (1970) that a research paradigm is an interpretive framework within which "scientists construct the reality they are investigating" (Berzhonsky, 1993, p. 77). This conceptualization of the self theory, contains at its base, "irrefutable" hardcore assumptions and values "about reality, life and epistemology [Berzhonsky, 1990], idealized self-images, and possible selves [Markus and Nurius, 1986]" (p. 77). One's hard core assumptions direct the methods and heuristics used to cope with life and solve the problems of daily living. This is followed by a set of testable and revisable protective belt of theories incorporating; hypotheses, constructs, and

expectations. It is the conceptual framework within which people make sense of their experience. It provides the basis upon which people address questions about the purpose, meaning, and direction in their life.

Berzhonsky (1993) sees three types of self theorists, expanding on Kelly's notion of self as scientific self theorist: First, are the scientific, information oriented self theorists. Second are the normative oriented, dogmatic self theorists. Finally there are the diffuse/avoidant oriented, ad hoc theorists.

The scientific theorists are self-reflective, skeptical about their own self constructs and open to self relevant information. These people deal with problems and decisions by actively seeking, processing, and evaluating self relevant information. These people are most like the identity achievers and moratoriums in Marcia's (1980) framework.

The dogmatic self theorists are conformists who have incorporated the expectations and values of parental and authority figures. They tend to be rigid in their self structures vigorously defending their selves. They are also tend to be closed to new information that could challenge their self structures. Their processing is assimilative in nature. They are most similar to Marcia's foreclosures.

The ad hoc theorists have a fragmented self theory manifesting procrastination, and avoidance in dealing with personal issues and decisions. They are reactive to situational demands usually waiting for things to happen to them. They tend to be other directed in their coping efforts and are most similar to Marcia's identity diffused.

The model assumes that most people are capable of utilizing all three social cognitive orientations. Epistemological assumptions are seen as influencing ones approach to self theorizing, thus if one has vitalistic (or formistic) assumptions one believes that people possess a true identity or inner essence. Consistent with Waterman's view they enter a process of discovery to determine their true self in the hope of realizing their pre-determined destiny. If one holds mechanistic assumptions one begins with a blank slate. One reacts to environmental stimuli which determine which components are added to the growing self structure. Berzhonsky (1993) believes that constructivist assumptions include both organismic and contextualist views as the following comment suggests:

People operating within environmental and biological constraints must literally

make up a story about who they think they are. These constructions are amenable to outside influences and may change in order to have greater practical utility" (1993; p. 177).

In Berzhonsky's view self-structure is context specific where,

> ...the meaning and effectiveness of ones identity is relative to the conceptual context of assumptions and values within which it is constructed and the environmental and social historical contexts within which the person lives. (1993; p.177).

In sum, Berzhonsky's point is that people construct identities in different ways based on their epistemological assumptions. The structures that develop are the frames within which meaning is made and reality is interpreted. To a large extent the self structure is determined by context.

Gergen (1990) supports the idea that the stories we construct are not necessarily ontologically comprehensive. That they do not represent the totality of our experience, is also relevant here in that the hard core assumptions that Berzhonsky mentions may exist below the level of our awareness resembling the tacit assumptions that Sternberg mentions with reference to his triarchic theory of intelligence. This is idea is also consistent with the cognitive scientist's notions of automatic processing. Thus, it is possible that stories could contradict one another based in values that are equally contradictory. Marcia (1993) in discussing Berzhonsky's theory wonders if both formistic and constructivist views could be true and not necessarily mutually exclusive. Marcia also queries what accounts for the fact that some contexts just feel right and that leaving a context produces feelings of asynchrony? Berzhonsky (1993) suggests that self - structures "become increasingly differentiated and integrated and they have emerging properties". (p. 187). While this may generally be true, structures do not always get better (i.e., more complex) , sometimes, to borrow from Kelly's phrase, the categories harden and constrain what is possible, not allowing for further differentiation to occur. There are times that a person constructs stories about the self that limit rather than expand one's options. Marcia notes that in his view self structures are primarily constructed but there is still a suggestion of some of the identity elements emerging. When one deviates from them one feels out of synch. Here without

acknowledging it Marcia is addressing lived bodily experience. Becoming aware of these processes could change one's functioning considerably.

Missing from these conceptions are the lived bodily experiences that Gendlin (1995), Merleau-Ponty (1962), Ricoeur (1981), Young (1983), Gilligan et al. (1988), de Beauvoir (1952), Fraleigh (1987), Hanson (1986), among others, speak about as the ontological ground for one's existence. The following chapter will focus on the development of women's sense of self emphasizing the theoretical work of Miller (1986), Gilligan (1982), Belenky et al. (1986), Young, (1983), Langer (1957), and their colleagues. Particular attention will be paid to the issue of women's lived bodily experience including the lived body in the dance context.

CHAPTER FIVE
WOMEN'S VOICES:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S SENSE OF SELF

I said sometimes I hear my voice and its been
HERE silent all these years. (Amos,1991).

A. The Self-in Relation

To matter. Not to be as naught. Is there any will deeper than that? It's not just unqualified will, as Schopenhauer would have it, that makes us what we are; nor is it the will to power of Nietzche, but something deeper, of which the will to power is a manifestation... we want power because we want to matter. (Goldstein, 1983, p. 212).

In Miller's seminal work Toward a new psychology of women, the central thesis is that women have been defined according to the standards of male development which has led to the view that they are inferior in their development and makeup (Miller, 1986). Focus has been placed on their abilities in the relational domain which have often been interpreted as weaknesses. For example the need to be in connection has been interpreted as dependency. Women's feelings of inferiority or frustration are seen by Miller as the direct result of such processes and reflect the difficulty women have in extricating themselves from their subordinate position. The focus of Miller's analysis is on the distinction between temporary and permanent inequality in relationships. In development, a relationship of temporary inequality between child and adult eventually transforms into one of equality. In situations, however, where permanent disparity in power is present there is a systematic oppression of one group often resulting in the entrenching of the belief that such differences are the natural order.

Assigning particular values to views of women as giving, cooperative, passive, self-less beings is seen by Miller (1986) as part of their definition by male dominated culture. By placing lesser value on women's characteristics and higher value on qualities which are

seen as being male, the subordinate status of women is reinforced. The result is women, as they distance themselves from their own experiences and what they know to be true, deny a part of their selves. Miller calls for a re-examination of those processes and concepts that have defined women. Specifically, credit should be given for characteristics, which are often regarded as male characteristics and therefore unfeminine (e.g., rationality, power), that women also possess in good measure. Thus, Miller sees power and the need to use it in ways which enhance the self and others as being a foreign experience for them. Miller suggests that some women fear using their power because it may lead to loss of connection and subsequently abandonment and rejection. One woman that Miller interviewed, who brushed aside the thought of doing something for herself, stated, "Just for me? If it's just for me, what's the point? That just doesn't feel like any reason at all." (Miller, 1986, p. 122).

Miller sees society as structured for the benefit of those who are dominant so that the "characteristics most highly developed in women and perhaps most essential to human beings are the very characteristics that are specifically dysfunctional for success in the world as it is" (p. 124). Miller calls for a "reclaiming" of conflict–of proceeding in interaction with others in new and creative ways in order to be more authentic–to be able to be and define oneself.

Miller (1991) and her colleagues have proposed a theory of the self-in-relation believing that the notion of "self", as evidenced in traditional western psychological theorizing, emphasizing the development of autonomous self-defined beings, does not appear to fit well with women's experience. Cultural sex role stereotypes are seen as affecting the interchange from an early age. Thus, girls are encouraged to augment their empathic abilities and to learn how to deal with others while the focus for boys is on autonomy and mastery. Girls come to see themselves as attending to and responding to relationships. Surrey (1991) has suggested that this early representation of self in girls can be described as being more encompassing in girls as opposed to the more boundaried self that boys are encouraged to develop.

According to Kaplan, Gleason, and Klein (1991) women's core self structure emerges out of the dynamic of the early mother-child relationship which is seen as emphasizing affective sensitivity, responsiveness, and reciprocation. The image of mother

or caretaker is incorporated into the self structure. In contrast to epigenetic theories of development which place development within discrete stages, the author's see women's development as being fluid and interconnected as earlier selves contribute to self development in culturally and personally defined ways (note here the similarity with Bruner, Kelly, and Gergen and Gergen). These paths may include; (1) increasing potential for mutually empathic relationships involving sharing and responding to affective states, (2) relational flexibility, (3) ability to work through conflict, and (4) a sense of greater empowerment. Thus, in late female adolescence females do not grow out of relationships but rather they add new lines of development in becoming more complex (Kaplan, Gleason, & Klein, 1991).

In adolescence, while cognitive and sexual capacities are seen to greatly increase, many studies indicate that this is a time where girls contract rather than expand. Freud saw it as a time for girls to use their libidinal energy in the service of others rather than directed to their own psychological constructions. Thus, as Tolman (1992) has pointed out they learn that their own sexual perceptions, sensations, and impulses are not supposed to arise from themselves but in response to the attention of a male. This form of being object to the desires of the male results in the idea that her own bodily and sexual feelings are not acceptable. By internalizing these doubts she cannot bring these parts of herself into relationship as an active agent. Denying her feelings she leaves her self out of relationship. Challenging these introjections often leads to conflict. Women are not supposed to be powerful since it is unfeminine. She is left feeling that she can not use all of her capabilities. Her sense of self as an active agent–in the context of acting within a relationship and for the relationship–has been altered to defer to others needs and desires. Miller (1991) suggests that as girls develop their cognitive and physical skills they do not abandon their need to stay in connection–they possess agency in community.

Thus, a paradox is created in which girls gives up relationship in order to be in relationship (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). In sum, at adolescence girls seek to use all their capacities including their sexual ones, but seek to do so within a context that will fulfill their desire to be a "being-in relationship". Miller (1991) suggests that boys, preoccupied with trying to develop themselves and a sense of their independent identity come to view girls as

beings who should adapt themselves to their needs. Miller suggests that girls are not seeking the kind of identity prescribed for boys, but rather to be a being in relation, which means developing all of ones self in increasingly complex ways, in increasingly complex relationships.

Surrey (1991), assuming women have developed greater competency in relationships, emotional closeness, and emotional flexibility than men, sees empathy as the central concept in women's relational experience. Surrey emphasizes that relationship is the experience of mutual empathy. Jordan (1991) has found that the ability to experience, comprehend, and respond to another's inner state is a complex process which involves balancing affective arousal and cognitive structure. Through modeling, practice, and via feedback an individual builds on experiences with others, assimilating them, and basing subsequent responses on them. Through increasing mutuality in the early mother-daughter relationship empathy develops. Surrey sees three factors accruing from these early relationships as being crucial for the development of empathy in the self-structure, the girl's interest in and emotional desire for mother-daughter connection, the child's increasing capacity for mutual empathy, and mutual empowerment.

A sense of knowing how to perceive, respond, and relate to anothers needs and feelings develop from the mutual reciprocation involved in attending to each other in the mother-daughter relationship (Surrey, 1991). Interactive validation of differences between self and other is seen as important for accurate empathic processing. It is also important to recognize the other as a "growing individual with changing needs and newly developing competencies" (Surrey, 1991, p. 58). Mutual self-esteem is enhanced by and related to the degree to which sharing, openness, and mutual understanding is present. This reciprocity along with role flexibility are seen as essential to women's growth. This aids in the acquisition of the ability to take on multiple perspectives which she terms the "oscillating self structure".

Surrey (1991) defines self as "a construct useful in describing the organization of a person's experience and construction of reality that illuminates the purpose and directionality of her or his behavior" (Surrey, 1991, p. 52). Surrey notes that what contemporary theorists of women's development such as Miller and Gilligan share is a

conception of self as being organized and developed in the context of relationships. This is in contrast with theories that emphasize separation from the mother in early childhood (e.g., Freud, Mahler), the family in adolescence (e.g., Erikson), and ones teachers and mentors in adulthood (e.g., Levinson). These theorists place emphasis on the importance of autonomy, self-reliance, independence, self-actualization, and the following and fulfilling of individual dreams. Interestingly intimacy is seen to occur after one's identity has been stabilized. Surrey (1991) sees self-in-relationship as an evolving process implying openness, flexibility, and change. Here the construct relationship-differentiation is used in contrast to the traditional idea of separation-individuation, and refers to a process of increasing complexity, choice, fluidity, and articulation in the context of relationships. The model, rather than emphasize the direction of growth through greater autonomy and the breaking of emotional ties, values growth within relationship where the challenge is to maintain connection in a pattern of mutual dynamic interactional growth. Surrey defines relationship as "an example of emotional and cognitive inter-subjectivity: the ongoing, intrinsic inner awareness and responsiveness to the continuous existence of the other or others and the expectation of mutuality" (p.58). The holding of others as part of the self is a component of all real relationships. Relationship and identity develop in synchrony.

In summary, women's sense of self is seen as composed of the following elements:

1. Interest in and attention to others which forms the basis for connection and empathy.
2. Sharing experiences and expecting mutuality heightens the development of self and other.
3. The reciprocity of mutual sensitivity and responsibility that develops enhances subsequent feelings of empowerment and self awareness. The self is seen as developing in relation through an interactional process where understanding and being able to empower the self as well as others are the points of emphasis.

B. Different Voices

Human being is the being whose essence is not having an essence.
(Simone de Beauvoir).

Gilligan's (1982) work has challenged the traditional view of moral reasoning offered by Kohlberg in which the difference between women's and men's morality held mens emphasis on separation, rationality and universal principles to be superior to women who spoke of morality from an ethic based on care and concern for maintaining relationship. These differences were also found to be reflected in women's self-definitions which were based in connection to others versus those of men which tended to be based in separation (Lyons, 1983). In Gilligan's words men and women spoke in different voices. Gilligan found that there was a systematic bias in the interviewing strategy in which interviewers would consistently lead female subjects to believe that their responses were less than adequate. In reviewing the transcripts it was found that girls' voices would become increasingly unsure of their responses. In addition the categories were derived primarily from research on males. Code (1989) has noted than some of Gilligan's respondents demonstrated thinking in accord with Aristotle's notion of phronesis (practical reasoning) with a thoughtfulness and responsiveness to the nuances and subtleties of context. This contrasts with the Kantian focus of determining principled moral standards. Yet, girls in demonstrating such thinking would be judged to be inferior in their thinking according to Kohlbergian standards. In addition she pointed out the assumption that the male focus on autonomous decisions and universal standards was superior is an arbitrary one (Code, 1989). In sum, Gilligan has been read, wrongly in my view, as positing that the two voices form a clear and distinct separation along gender lines. In fact Gilligan suggests that boys tend to make their judgments in a way that is based in different ethical concerns than is the case for girls. Both sexes, however, may demonstrate either voice (Gilligan, 1982).

Gilligan and associates have subsequently began to unravel the development of girls as they grow into adulthood (Brown, 1989; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Debold, Wilson & Malave, 1993; Gilligan, Brown & Rogers, 1990; Gilligan, Lyons, & Hanmer, 1990; Gilligan, Rogers, & Tolman, 1991; Tolman, 1992). Brown states that at the age of eight girls are described as "having a real sense of outspokenness, of claiming their own sense of authority in the world, being very honest about relationships and the things that hurt them" (Rose, 1990, p. 23) . In the words of Brown's colleague Rogers they are capable of "outrageously wonderful statements" (Rose, 1990; p. 23). By the fifth grade girls who are still open and

responsive in their interactions with others begin to realize that adult women prefer an idealized girl, one who is 'nice'. These girls introject this imposed view of how they should be into their relations with each other and while still able to voice themselves honestly they are faced increasingly with worrying about being seen as nice (Brown, 1989). At this time, on the edge of entering adolescence,11 year old girls have a "moment of resistance" in which they have clarity in their view of the world and confidence in what they know. In Gilligan's words "Eleven-year-olds are not for sale".

Brown and Gilligan (1992) have found that as many girls reach adolescence their voices change to ones which are more passive and submissive, they silence themselves in order to preserve what they view as relationships or as in her words, "a paradoxical sense of having to give up relationship for the sake of 'relationships' " (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 216). The phrase "I don't know" is found repeatedly in the transcripts of the 15 and 16 year olds. The authors describe a process whereby most girls, as they grow into adolescence, become reluctant to express their feelings, suppressing what they know from their own experiences. Thus, honesty in relationships begins to seem selfish, mean, or rude. They dissociate themselves from their thoughts feelings and experiences as they disconnect from each other and from the important women in their lives.They become psychologically resistant to what they know and feel. In contrast, there are a small group of girls who were able to maintain their open honest stance with the world and not to care much about what others thought of them when they expressed their deeply held thoughts and feelings. These girls are known as political resisters. They resist the temptation to relinquish what they know in the face of political pressure to conform and be "nice girls".

C. Different Ways of Knowing

Following the perspective of Gilligan and colleagues and Perry's (1970) work on men's intellectual development during their college years, Belenky et al. (1987) studied the intellectual development of women. Perry described how men passed through a series of positions in the form of epistemological perspectives in which one gave meaning to their educational experiences. Perry found that initially one viewed the world in terms of polarities (e.g., right/wrong) a position Perry called Basic Dualism. Here learners are

passive, dependent upon authorities to tell them the truth. Gradually students move to a position where diversity of opinion and a multiplicity of perspectives are recognized. Eventually the person may reach full relativism where it is realized that knowledge is constructed not given. It is contextual, not absolute. It is in this final period that Perry suggested that the affirmation of ones personal identity and commitment evolves.

Belenky et al. (1987) asked women about their experiences with ways of knowing, identity transformations, and moral outlooks. The women were grouped into five epistemological categories:

1. Silence–was a position where women experience themselves as mindless and voiceless subject to the proclaim of authority figures.
2. Received knowing–was a position from which women could receive the knowledge of others or reproduce it but were not capable of creating it on their own.
3. Subjective knowing–was a perspective from which one viewed knowledge as personal, subjective and intuitive.
4. Procedural knowers–were women who applied objective procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge.
5. Constructed knowing–was a position where knowledge was viewed as contextual and women experiencing themselves as creators of knowledge valuing both subjective and objective strategies for knowing. These categories were not seen as fixed or universal, nor were they seen as necessarily exclusive to women.

Belenky et al. (1987) found a correspondence between the epistemological category and the kinds of relationships these women experienced in their families of origin while growing up and in their self-conceptions. Silent knowers came from families in which they felt isolated, had few friends, with little dialogue. These women had great difficulty in describing themselves, often only able to express things external to themselves. Conversation was not valued in these homes and when words were spoken they were often explosions of intense feelings or of violence. Alcoholism and abuse were often present. Life at home was seen as chaotic, unpredictable.

Received knowers had little self confidence, few experiences as agents of change in their own lives. These women tended to view themselves as being defined by other's conceptualizations of them or around social expectations and concrete roles. In childhood these women typically experienced communication with parents as one-way. They were told what to do and were expected to listen and also assumed that this was a permanent state of affairs. The marriages of these women and those of their parents often conformed to the sex role stereotype of male dominance. In accord with this finding, adolescent rebellion was noticeable absent.

Subjective knowers demonstrated a dramatic shift from passivity to action, from silence to a protesting inner voice and infallible gut. For these women first hand knowledge was an important source of information in making decisions for themselves, their sense of voice related to their growing sense of self, agency, and control. While in Perry's group of men this was found to occur in adolescence, linking it to the impact of a liberal education and exposure to cultural pluralism. For women it was influenced by life changes outside academic life where pictures of failed male authority and their own strong actions helped them move to subjectivism. Belenky et al. (1987) noted that viewed from the perspective of Erikson's theory, women who escaped from parental authority or inhibiting marriages, were similar to those who demonstrated what Erikson called a negative identity (defining themselves primarily in terms of opposing others or what they were not) while simultaneously rejecting family or cultural values. These women were uncertain about their futures due in part to a lack of a secure, integrated, and enduring sense of self. Preoccupied with a choice between self and other they usually chose to sever connections, ending relationships in order to gain first hand experiences.

Gilligan (1982) suggests that for people operating from a responsibility orientation, initiating action on behalf of the self is a first step towards mature moral thought in which the self is included as an equal claimant in any moral decision. While the women described by Belenky et al. (1987) were beginning to put themselves first, they were not developing a coherent reflective moral position. There was minimal forethought in their decision to walk away from their pasts. These women experienced a difficult separation from familiar contexts and relationships within which their old identity was embedded. Consistent with

Gilligan and Miller's (1976) suggestion that women tend to define themselves in the contexts of relationships, these women find themselves in a state of flux. They found themselves taking risks, open to novelty and change. Women in this position began to learn procedures for systematically analyzing their experiences. Their strategies grew out of their embeddedness in human relationships and their alertness to the details of everyday life. They often kept diaries expressing themselves through them.

Procedural and connected knowers tend to come from families in which family relations can be described by images of care, connection, mutuality, and reciprocity. Many of these women had open relationships with their mothers who were viewed as role models valuing them particularly when they spoke their minds. Fathers, however, were seen as models of separate knowing while mothers of connected knowing. They also felt a greater sense of connection to their mothers feeling they were being understood in their own terms. These mothers demonstrated a form of discourse in which question posing was central while inviting the other to participate. Their parents tended to listen to them with the whole family participating in an ongoing conversation .

What is not clear from this research is the extent to which one can define the categories as representing ways of knowing which dominate the persons being (Code, 1989). I do not understand why, for instance, received knowing necessarily is lower on the hierarchy than subjective knowing, nor why they may not vary with context. For instance there are some circumstances where being a received knower is the optimum position to hold. Further there should be ways of determining the value of statements that have a viability in addition to intuitive understanding. It may be more useful to view them as strategies or as receptive and expressive modes. I do see, however, value in the author's presentation of how these ways of knowing connect developmentally to their families of origin. With their family backgrounds in mind it becomes easier to value the author's claims.

In sum, the efforts of these researchers can first of all be seen as a response to the dominant cultures traditions in defining women's experiences. In many cases research on men has been taken as the standard to which women should conform. A situation where their differences in acting and thinking are being taken as less adequate or deviant from the "established" norms. Miller (1986) rightly addresses the issue of power differential and the

necessity for women to reclaim their power both personally and politically. Several of the authors have called into question traditional research methods as well as the use of language which may not represent women's lived reality. Thus, Gilligan's notion of voice and Gergen's (1990) eschewing of traditional narrative forms can be seen as moves in the direction of a redefinition of women's being in the world.

In the next section I turn to the notion that bodily experience is the ground for the ontological. This body of work has been largely neglected but has great implications for understanding the way in which one comes to experience and understand one's world. In the final section I will discuss some of the literature pertaining to women's lived bodily experience in dance.

D. Psyche Embedded: The Body Denied ?

In her essay Throwing Like a Girl, Young (1983) sees feminine bodily existence as an "inhibited intentionality". Women are viewed as typically lacking the confidence to enter into bodily relations to the fulfillment of their possibilities through their own actions. Thus, they are seen as under using and underestimating the body's true capacity. Instead of feeling an "I can" an "I can not" limits them from acting as a unified whole in order to be able to act unselfconsciously. Young suggests that the body's ability to act in harmony with one's intentions (and I would suggest implying some degree of automatic processing) has been severed in women to produce a hesitancy or constraining of coordinated movement.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) suggested that in projecting a goal to which an individual moves toward, the body brings unity to its world and to its self. The world is organized as an extension of an individual's being, a view consistent with a constructionist perspective in which a person is both part of and a constructor of their world.

Young (1983) describes feminine bodily existence as a discontinuous unity with the self and the world, and thus women tend use the body in a constricted way. The body parts required to perform and those that actually come into use are disconnected and their movements may appear uncoordinated or overly effortful. This is in contrast to Merleau-Ponty's suggestion that for the body to be effective it must move from a subjectivity focused on its own possibilities, not back onto the self. Young sees feminine body existence as a

subject nullified by itself–as an object focused self consciously on the self. The "I can not" withholds the body's full commitment from experiencing the "I can".

According to Young (1983) Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between lived or phenomenal space and objective space. Phenomenal space arises from acting in and on the world. The lived relations of space arise from the body's capacities and intentional relations. In Young's view, feminine existence experiences lived space as enclosed or restricted. Thus one experiences oneself as positioned as an object in space. Women's bodily expression is thus limited and they tend to lean, stretch forward , and reach up or out less than they are capable of doing. Moreover, in a range of performance skills they demonstrate less vigorous ranges of motion, use of fewer body parts, and lack coordination in the synchronous use of those parts. In sitting their limbs tend to be held within the confines of their immediate personal space. It must be noted that social conventions in our culture are a part of this finding. Thus, sitting with ones legs apart or using up space while sitting is considered unfeminine while bending over too much may be viewed as a sexual signifier. In sum, using space as freely as men do is considered unfeminine, assertive, as well as having, in certain movements and postures, a sexual significance.

As Young (1983) notes for women their existence does contain the link between the body and ones immediate space as suggested by Merleau- Ponty. The "here" within ones immediacy is severed and is thus experienced as something "out there". When women project their possibilities they remain in the tentative state and are not acted fully upon–they hold back.

Young (1983) has also found that whereas Merleau-Ponty speaks about the body as being the subject constituting space, being both origin and subject of spatial relations, for women the experience is that of being in a position in space. Young considers feminine spatiality to be contradictory in that bodily existence is both spatially constituted and a spatial subject. The lived experience in this double existing is that of an object. Women may experience themselves in motion as though they were an object moving. This is consistent with Young's suggestion that for women they do not feel like they are the origin of their own intentional capabilities. This is seen when women hesitate to move when full body motion is required.

Young's depiction of feminine bodily comportment motility and spatiality have their origins not in female anatomy or physiology but from women's situation in our culture. These cultural values and beliefs serve to restrict women's sense of their capacities and limit their opportunities as well based on out of date and controlling notions about their bodies and capacities. In essence it is women's lack of power in defining their own bodies and its capabilities that restricts what they experience. In our culture boys are given free range to explore their bodies capabilities, and thus they develop skilled and unselfconscious movement. In contrast, there are numerous cultural caveats against women's use of their bodies. In Young's view they have been assigned definitions of themselves as physically inhibited, positioned, and objectified.

A girl's being in our culture typically includes styles of comportment and movement which serve to define them as feminine. Girls know how to walk, sit, stand, and gesture in feminine ways. Girls must be careful, they should not get dirty, they should not be assertive or aggressive. Thus, they become hesitant and unsure of what they actually can do.

In summary, Young (1983) sees the modalities of feminine bodily existence in terms of being lived as both subject and object. It is the product of living in a sexist culture where women are viewed as bodies, as objects, the object of anothers subjective intents as if they had none of their own. If this becomes internalized they also come to see their bodies as objects and limit their capacity for their own intentionality. In part, Young's essay is a critique of Merleau-Ponty's tendency to universalize male embodied experience. Butler (1990) also considers this point in her critique of Merleau-Ponty.

Gilligan, Brown, and Rogers (1990) have written about the embedding of Psyche (here referred to as the self, the sense of an I, a center of feeling, of consciousness, of being in life) in body, relationships, and culture. The authors note that the word personality, has its roots in the latin *per*, meaning through, and *sonare*, meaning sound. They pose the question of what words shall one use in speaking about Psyche? They chose to speak of Psyche as in body and thus in historical time, and cultural space. In their view psychological theorizing has, in the name of proper scientific procedure, disembedded psyche from body and thus rendered it an object for observation (Bruner, 1990; makes a similar point with respect to the self). If one takes the view that sex does not make much difference in

personality then Psyche is walled off from body, relationships and culture. Conversely, if it is embodied in relationship and culture then one should expect sexual differences to be prevalent in psychological development (Gilligan et al., 1990).

E. Discourses of Desire

Following up on this idea of Psyche being disembodied Debold, Wilson, and Malave (1994) have investigated the process by which girls in our culture disengage themselves from their bodily experiences. Wolf (1991) in The Beauty Myth proposes that in our culture what is considered to be beautiful and desirable about women are defined by images from our media from primarily a male point of view. Negative body images are seen as a response to cultural messages about what women are supposed to look like. In our culture it is the body shape of slenderness, facial looks, and flirtation that are valued most highly. Women by investing their resources in their looks perpetuate the problem. Women's lives are distorted through a process in which their selves are distorted.

In late childhood girls are comfortable with their bodies and like how they look. These girls "have an integrated sense of self" and their bodies are not "split off from their minds to be observed and judged" (Debold, Wilson, & Malave; 1994, p. 205). When questioned as to why she likes the way she looks, nine year old Celeste replies "Just the way I am is fine with me... because its me" (Debold, WIlson, & Malave; 1994). The authors suggest that in adolescence, boys announce their authority to lay judgments on girls attractiveness. Under the defining framework of the Romance myth, "who girls are", becomes reduced to what they look like, and unfortunately they even become cut off from each other "by the competitive scramble for boy's approval." Boys opinions of them confer status while the converse is not true. It is a time when girls begin to feel powerless, in the face of their genetic predispositions to have certain body shapes, and helpless in the face of a changing body. A culture which chooses to evaluate them triggers their psyches into a self-protective stance in which they internalize what they perceive to be the male standards for beauty. In doing so they look at themselves as boys do, as objects. This confers the illusion of power and control. Thus, they experience a shift from their way of being before reaching adolescence, feeling and experiencing their bodies, to simply observing them.

It is believed that mothers are also complicit in the process whereby daughters disconnect from their bodily experiences (Debold, Wilson, & Malave, 1994). The mother's role may be illustrated by the following comments; pull in your stomach, fix your hair, smile, get your hair out of your face, cross your legs, stop biting your nails, Are you going out looking like that?, put a little lipstick on. Each of these comments contain a cultural ideal of how one should look or behave to be nice or be attractive. The authors believe that the standards and how they are communicated serve to undermine girls. There is an expectation of being able to control these aspects, but feelings of shame or guilt may develop when one can not live up to them or perhaps, if the expectations are met the girl may feel guilty for deceiving others about who they really are. In its stead the authors suggest that people should focus on the function of the body in terms of what it is capable of doing–of an agentic sense of lived bodily experience. The authors present the example of a woman artist who, with her daughter, made a game of dressing up in unusually artsy combinations, taking pleasure in the body adornment while de-emphasizing the cultures ideals of beauty in the process. This taught her daughter how to be noticed, but on her own terms. In Miller's language she could reclaim her power as a woman and take responsibility for her ability to be attractive.

Tolman's (1992) thesis is that adolescent girls' sexual desire is absent from our psychological theories. Beginning with Freud the thesis outlines how the desire of young women are missed. Freud she notes, moved from a position of acknowledging girls erotic feelings and their importance for psychological health to a position where passive sexual desire was a mark of maturity, a mark of femininity. She is to be an object of desire not a subject in her own right in order to serve as the stimulation for the males libido. Current writings from the psychoanalytic tradition have maintained this silence on adolescent girls development by focusing on the pre-oedipal period.

Tolman (1992) goes on to note how adolescent girls' discourse of desire is missing from women's theoretical writings as well as those of more traditional perspectives. Chodorow (1978) ignoring the possibility of girls sexual desire replaces it with a romance story suggesting that adolescent girls overemphasize their identification with and attachment to their mothers as they learn to become women in our culture. Chodorow (1989) in

recognizing this problem has recently suggested that theorists must now address the importance of sexuality and the body in their theoretical writings on gender identity development.

Miller (1991) in a paper on "The development of a woman's sense of self" theorizes that in adolescence, a girls trust in her bodily and psychological instincts are undermined as she comes under social cultural pressures to subvert her needs and wants to the service of others. She links girls' loss of sexuality as an acceptable part of her sense of self, to the loss of her sense of agency as she becomes a person who cares for and works in the service of others. Thus, Miller assumes the absence of desire without empirical inquiry (Tolman, 1992).

Jordan (1987) characterizes gender differences in sexual desire as a problem of sexual entitlement for boys and sexual accommodation and lack of clarity for girls. She suggests that girls' lack of clarity emerges from the failure of the girls' partner to acknowledge her agency and her desire as it relates to his. This last point then makes it more difficult for her to know her desire. Tolman (1992) suggest that her position is confused by a tension resulting from the acknowledgement that girls have strong bodily responses to sexual contact while also suggesting that what girls really want is closeness, tenderness, and being loved. Thus, girls are left with a disembodied experience of their own sexuality denying that they have strong urges and desires of their own. Tolman goes on to point out that the developmental psychology literature is not informative of the adolescent girl's experience of desire. This suggests that there is a silencing within the literatures discourse. The resistance to this notion of girls desire is maintained by repression, de-eroticization, denigration, and diversion. Further, what little research there is focuses not on girls desire, but on how their sexuality is problematic and reflected in teenage pregnancy and disease. In glossing over girls bodily feelings, desire is suppressed because the investigation of their lived experience of desire has been left out. Thus, while studies have found numerous correlates that predict sexual intercourse, desire is curiously absent. Tolman's criticism on this absent discourse also extends to French feminists such as Cixous and Irigaray, who expunge references to the body out of the discourse on female adolescent sexuality.

Tolman (1992) is also critical of sexual scripting theory in which the role of erotic interest and sexual arousal are subsumed by the wish to engage in gender appropriate behavior. For boys, however, it is acknowledged that they have sex because it feels good which places their bodies back into their development of self. Girl's scripts focus on the whore/madonna, good girls/bad girls scripts in which the bad girl script, which allows for girl's desire, is labelled as the deviant one. From Tolman's point of view, the literature does not acknowledge the possibility that by virtue of coming of age in a patriarchal culture where girls desire is buried, that they may experience desire differently from boys.

Tolman (1992) also states that while Gilligan and colleagues have not addressed this issue they do offer a compelling explanation for its absence. Gilligan (1982) writes about the relational paradox in women's development–the giving up of voice for the sake of relationship and Brown (1989) comments on the power of images of perfection in girls lives. They describe how girls become selfless in relationships and Tolman believes that this is mirrored by "good girls" having no sexual desire. There is no voice of desire. More recently Gilligan (1990) has suggested that the disconnecting of their bodies from knowledge about themselves, relationships, and the world around them (knowledge which may be politically and psychologically dangerous), is strategic in recognizing the potential for creating problems in the world they are entering. What limited data researchers have accumulated suggest that at least for white middle class girls sexual desire is "an aspect of their experience that they may not and can not know" (Tolman, 1992, p. 35) .

Tolman's research was an attempt to discover if this missing discourse of desire was a gap in the literature or a reflection of female adolescent experience. Half of the girls in the study reported experiencing desire while the others expressed three types of response; they felt no desire, they did not know if they felt desire or not, or Tolman could not determine from the report. A number of the girls made a strong distinction between desire and relationship contradicting the commonly held notion that girls do not want sex, just relationship. She suggests that this involves a cultural stricture in which girls are not supposed to know about sex or have desire for it. Nevertheless most of the girls who experienced desire expressed it in the context of relationship–the erotic voice. The voice of the body was central to these girls experience of desire. In contrast, those who did not voice

desire also spoke about an absence of feeling with respect to their body, it remained voiceless. Girls who were unsure about their feelings were unsure about what their bodily feelings were or meant.

The girls in Tolman's study had difficulty expressing their bodily experiences and were not comfortable naming body parts (e.g., vagina, labia, clitoris) or what those parts felt like. Many of the girls had conflicting voices mixing what their bodies felt, what they felt they could express, controlling their feelings and of their responsibility in controlling the feelings of boys. There were concerns for their vulnerability as well as their reputations and often their voices merged in confusion and complexity. Keeping sexual feelings out of their relationships served to protect them. Urban girls experienced desire sequentially first by feeling erotic desire move through their bodies and then by controlling the desire through a silencing of their bodies in order to protect themselves. Suburban girls spoke of a conflict between curiosity about their feelings and the need to control them. They demonstrated a dual consciousness immersed in the body while psychically resisting. The image of the good girl was prominent in their thoughts. These girls also did not speak directly about the dangers of AIDS, getting pregnant, or reputation, unlike the urban girls who voiced their concerns.

The lesbian and bisexual girls voiced confusion about their feelings of desire combining fear with vulnerability to societies homophobia. They felt a pressure to keep their bodies silent or to disconnect their bodily experience in order to protect the self.

Tolman also found that one third of her sample had experienced sexual abuse or violence and linked this to the finding that women who experience sexual harassment often find that their experiences were dominated by a presence of mind and absence of body. The author suggested that a voiceless body puts women at risk. For the suburban girls in particular, their absence of consciousness in blending the erotic with the dangerous while continuing to explore also places them at risk. They remain unaware of the power of the erotic and do not know how to express and control it.

F. Psyche Embedded: Lived Bodily Experience in Dance

> Movement never lies. The body is a very strange business.
> (Graham, 1991, p. 122).

Brightman (1993) has found that relatively little has been written about the lived bodily experiences in dance because of the problem of translating lived bodily experience into words. They are, simply put, experiences of different kinds. She notes that much of the literature on dance addresses the body as an instrument to be manipulated and controlled, implying the self as the agent of control and the body as the instrument to be manipulated. Fraleigh (1987) sees this separation of mind/body as a function of the western cartesian tradition and of the discursive nature of our language for subjective experience. Nevertheless the literature contains many intimations of the body as an instrument and these descriptions focus on the body as an object to be mastered. This trend is matched by the tendency toward concerns for self-presentation and objectification (Brightman, 1993).

It was the dance notation pioneer Laban who commented that the body was not separate from the self. He emphasized that the body/self, which is expressed, experienced, and known to others, is known through the effort qualities of movement. Brightman (1993) agrees with this view of the body as the ground for ones being in the world. For Brightman the dance experience involves the experience of the body/self that is "different from (as well as mediated by) the everyday self" (p. 2). She sees the subject/object split in terms of the dancer's body being both the instrument which creates the dance as well as the medium through which one experiences the dance. The dancer experiences the dance as self and is fully situated in the body, but unable to differentiate self from the dance. For the dancers body "to take the imprint of the imagination and become the dance , it must be differentiated from the everyday body/self, and regarded as a stuff out of which the art can be created" (Brightman, 1993, p. 3). Brightman sees women dancer's experience as a "dialectic between self-objectifying and integrated experiences" (p. 13). As noted, much has been written about the view of body in dance as an instrument to be manipulated, where the self is the agent and the body is the "done to". Here in their attempts to master the body it is treated and spoken of as an object not subject. Brightman agrees with Hanson (1986) who also rejected the dualistic notion of self suggesting that the ambiguity one feels about experiencing the self as subject and object is a product of the imagination. Her views of self is that of a dynamic and fluid structure capable of shifts in perspective and which operates

dialectically. This is similar to the conception of self held by Merleau-Ponty (1962) in which the duality of self is seen as a shift of perspective in conscious experience.

This view of the unity of self-body is also held by dance phenomenologist Fraleigh (1987) who suggests that,

> The lived-body concept attempts to cut beneath the subject-object split, recognizing a dialectical and live dualism but not a dualism of body-soul or body-mind. A phenomenological (or lived) dualism implicates consciousness and intention and assumes an indivisible unity of body, soul, and mind. (p. 4)

For Fraleigh the subject-object split is an illusion. The duality is a way of speaking carried over from cartesian dualism. Thus, the self exists on the ontological ground of the lived, embodied unity of experience:

> Embodiment is not passive; it is articulate. In other words, I live my body as a body-of-motion, just as I also live my self in motion. Body, movement, self, and agency (implicating human will and freedom) are ultimately not separable entities, which is not to say that lived dualisms (or dialectics) may not appear in consciousness within certain contexts. (p. 13)

This view is consonant with Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) notion of flow experiences where the "I" dominates the "me," effectively destroying the subject-object split as self-consciousness disappears. In Fraleigh's conception when one reflects on their own body one becomes a body-object. When one focuses their attention on a body part this becomes the object of attention. An individual's presence in the moment is broken when one becomes "conscious of" and intentional in their stance. This can be distinguished from the body-subject which is defined as the body lived holistically and prereflectively as the self (Fraleigh, 1987). This conception bears a resemblance to Ricoeur's (1981) notion of lived time and Bergson's duree since it is seen as the time in which consciousness is present in the moment. For Fraleigh this occurs in dance when the self is unified in her action–when one is fully present in the moment and not reflecting on the self's actions. Similar to the ideas of Young (1983), Fraleigh (1987) further suggests that "my particular embodiment and my images of its powers and limitations condition my general comportment in life" (p. 17). Fraleigh adds that Sartre's "gaze of others" can be seen as becoming other to oneself when

one takes into account what one looks like to others. One may become other to oneself in the act of setting the body against the self or when it seems to be "other to me". For Fraleigh ones choices and actions create the body and this process is involved in creating the self. Here body and mind are continuous. In dance experience "even when the body is objectified it retains its subjectivity" (Fraleigh, p. 32) and that ones presence in dance it not the equivalent of presence in ones everyday life. Thus Fraleigh notes: "I do not express the personal manner in which I am not my self; I express the dance" (p. 32).

Langer (1957) viewed dance as the primal art form. Langer also saw dance the product of imagination and,

> ...with his own body-feeling he understands the gestic forms that are its innerwoven, basic elements... He sees the world in which his body dances, and that is the primary illusion of his work; in this closed realm he develops his ideas. (p. 197)

Langer (1957) suggested that in dance actual and virtual gestures mix in complex ways. She sees the relationship between the two as one in which the movements are actual gestures and seem to emanate from feeling which they actually do not:

> The dancer's actual gestures are used to create a semblance of self-expression, and are thereby transformed into virtual spontaneous movement, or virtual gesture. The emotion in which such gesture begins is virtual, a dance element, that turns the whole movement into dance-gesture. (p. 180).

Langer uses Laban's notion of the world and its energies as a basis for the virtual powers apparent in the framework of space-time in which the world of dance is a realm of illusion structured by virtual gestures. Langer (1957) further states:

> The dancer or dancers, must transform the stage for the audience as well as for themselves into an autonomous, complete, virtual realm and all motions into a play of visible forces in unbroken, virtual time. (p. 204).

Brightman (1993) criticizes Langer for missing the point that in her subjectivity the dancer becomes a virtual self conceived as "an imaginary created persona though the dance" (p. 44). Still credit is given for Langer's use of the imagination as the driving force behind the creation of the virtual for the experiencing the dance. In the language of Bruner's work it is another "I" position. Thus in descriptions of personal experiences Brightman states:

> When my body was experienced as an instrument, it was not at that moment synonymous with myself; it was sometimes even an enemy that was standing in my way,. preventing my success–a resistant physically to be mastered. I sometimes thought of my entire body as an object (as if I were observing myself at a distance); or as an object for others observing myself as if I were the teacher for example, observing her students. (p. 50).

Kirkland describes her experiences in ballet class similarly where criticism led to her focusing on certain parts of the body "dismembering me and dispelling any semblance of grace" (Kirkland & Lawrence, 1987, p. 33). Others such as Brady (1982) and Karsavina (1930) have made similar observations with respect to their problems with injuries and the rigors of punishing work loads. In these cases there is a splitting of the self, allowing the parts of the self which ordinarily protect one from pain to be overridden. Brightman also mentions her self consciousness in being a sought out dance partner where,

> ...the more I vanished the more they seemed to be interested. At the same time, I was very aware of willing this to happen–and so there was a shifting back and forth between the I who had this wish to disappear and the "Other" whose role I took on as if it were a costume to hide my real identity. (1993, p. 54).

Bentley (1983) in her diary of her experiences as a dancer in Balanchine's company notes her consciousness of beauty and how many dancers would work to extreme lengths to achieve the ideal look. Thus not surprisingly, eating disorders are common in the ballet world (Kirkland & Lawrence, 1987). These self critical experiences can be seen as instances of becoming other to self. Brightman notes that this occurs when learning new movements before they become automated.

In Brightman's (1993) thesis she describes a process where she learned to create a new self:

> In performing the dance, a new unity was forged for me, in which the separation of body parts, knowledge, and feeling was overcome. In moving, I created a persona for myself, and wore it, like a costume, to learn how to be other than myself. By doing this, I could stretch the boundaries of myself; I learned how to become a new self. (p. 56)

Thus, for artistic dancers the creation of a persona is often viewed as a necessity allowing one to stretch ones physical limitations and distance one from the everyday self. Consistent with Brightman's view, this new self is a virtual self keeping the everyday self out of the performance.

CHAPTER SIX:
THE INDIVIDUAL PORTRAITS

Believer I am, but admit it :
    words will not cure everything.
Breathless unless in the mouth,
    on a page, they are flat and black
    and have little to do with the details
        that make a life.
Every language is different and none exact. (Connelly, 1990, p. 40).

The following section contains the descriptions of the experiences of the six women who participated in this inquiry. Each description emphasizes the original words of these women as I attempted to minimize paraphrasing. This was consonant with my goal of being able to present the words, thoughts, and feelings of these women in a form which emphasized their original voices. These descriptions are organized around Gilligan's (1982) idea of voice which developed from reading and listening to the interviews for the voices of the body, self, and self-in-relationship. I must point out, however, that these descriptions are my interpretations of what seemed to me to be the most important features in these women's individual stories. In contemporary hermeneutic philosophy description is interpretation. Embedded within these portraits are the themes that I derived from the interviews. They are presented in bold face type throughout each portrait. I have included a brief summary of the points emphasized in each woman's experience at the end of each portrait. The presentation is a blend of journalistic-narrative approaches similar to that used by Alapack (1975) (who uses a novelistic presentation in his work) and Gilligan (1982) (who blends narrative with theory and literature in her work). In the portraits I make no effort to generalize beyond them or to compare them with others' experiences. Similarities, differences, as well as an overall synthesis are presented in the discussion section. There I will discuss the overall findings in relation to the relevant literature.

Jennifer's Story

Jennifer, who was twenty eight years old at the time of the final interview, is the youngest member of her family which also includes two older brothers. She had just retired from dancing. Jennifer's mother is still working in a management position with a large corporation. Her father, who was a teacher, passed away a number of years ago. I have found Jennifer to be a gracious, thoughtful, and patient person. She is very inquisitive and as she speaks it is apparent that she is just as curious about her life world as I am. She shares her experiences as a dancer with me freely and openly. Our conversation is punctuated with laughter as she finds her life story funny at times, but in a way that is reflective and indicative of someone who is trying to understand the ambiguities and ambivalence in her life.

Looking back on her childhood Jennifer comments:" I don't think I was a very happy kid but then I didn't really have a chance to be, because I've suffered from a history of abuse." The abuse, from one of her brothers, began at the age of eight. By the time she was ten her father had moved away having become involved with a younger woman. In addition, her best friend and only true confidante had also moved. Thus, she became "...a lot more protective too, a lot more defensive." Jennifer sees her parents as polar opposites; her mother is seen as responsible, stable, and very conservative. In contrast, her father was seen as irresponsible; "a self-centered man– a weirdo." He was a drama teacher and when she was young she saw him as a "kind of cool dad" who could amuse and relate to young children. His infidelity, however, resulted in her feeling "really angry about it. I was really hurt too and I think I really felt embarrassed for myself." Unable to see him again in a positive light she says, "I still resent the position he left my mother in." At a young age the most prominent males in Jennifer's life were viewed as violent, oppressive, and unreliable – they had betrayed her sense of trust. **Trust and Mistrust** is a bipolar theme playing a prominent role in her relationships throughout her story, both in childhood and later in adulthood.

Feeling insecure in her home Jennifer became "more independent minded– largely because authority broke down around me– and when you can't trust authority, then you have to be more independent." With her trust in authority figures damaged, she developed a strong **sense of justice**; an assertiveness which manifested itself in situations where someone was

being treated unfairly. She recalls an incident with a teacher in grade six who locked a student out of out of the class: "I yelled fuck off really loud" and then told him "What do you think your job is? If you think you're just here to be a disciplinarian you're damned wrong and if that's what you think your job is I'll report you– and scared the hell out of him (laughs)." With her life experiences informing her that authority could not be trusted Jennifer began to question it. When authority was wrong, when "you were trying to be a power abuser, I nailed you with it." Her sense of justice was not motivated by concerns about the transgression of abstract principles but was informed by her experiences, concern for relationship, and her understanding that being excluded often resulted in someone being hurt.

Trust and security were valued highly in Jennifer's relationships and she developed a sensitivity to relational integrity. She recalls an incident in childhood in which her best friend ended their relationship in order to become best friends with another girl. Feeling abandoned and not understanding why they both couldn't be best friends she concocted a story to make the friend feel sorry for her. This enabled her to confront her friend with her feelings of being hurt and anger at being excluded. The relationship survived and it highlights the importance of being treated fairly in relationships and concerns over exclusion. Becoming **independent minded** offered her a sense of control over her own life "to stand strong against something." It allowed her to speak out against injustice, a voice which was not being heard at home.

In high school Jennifer affiliated herself with the "bad kids" in school and used her assertiveness with authority figures to gain their respect. Jennifer feels that she was not really a bad kid herself but "just hung out with a lot of bad kids." Though some of these kids were involved in crime, she herself was "never irresponsible" nor would she ever sell them out. Loyalty was critical to her relationships in childhood. It was related to her sense of trust; in standing up for others against injustice she would be seen as trustworthy herself. If others in her life were untrustworthy she wouldn't be like them. What is also relevant here is that there is a feeling of "being ostracized out of the main stream." It was a feeling of resignation that she wouldn't get to take ballet, gymnastics, or jazz dance, and that the system was part of what kept her in that position. While much of this paints a negative picture of her

childhood there were also "a lot of fun times, happy times." She views herself as a "pretty bright kid. I was involved in drama since I was really young." Alhough people tried to encourage her to develop her interests, her lack of trust in authority made her suspicious of others who could judge her or offer support. She recalls an incident in which she had offered her father a puppet that she had created through considerable effort. He rejected it, and subsequently her in the process, by saying that he had no use for it. Achievement and realizing one's potential seemed to have little meaning for her anymore. From her childhood the themes of **trust and mistrust, independence, exclusion** and **a sense of justice** became central to Jennifer's definition of herself before becoming a stripper.

Jennifer's entrance into the world of exotic dance began one day while visiting a friend who was an exotic dancer. She recalls that:

> One day when I was visiting with her she said, "you have an audition in fifteen minutes" and I went "what!" and she said, "come on, come on, you have to."
>
> Because we had been talking about it a little bit, I mean over the course of the year. She came back and told me all these stories, glamor, lots of money, and a wonderful life in Vancouver.

Jennifer then went out on the road for a couple of weeks before informing her mother of her decision. She vividly recalls her mother's reaction: "It was just 'well don't expect any support from me' or something–she was really angry." This was to remain a source of conflict "always a little bit of tension and trying not to encourage me–when ever it came to that topic she'd say one little thing and just kill me off and not allow a conversation to happen" until one day she was able to have a "heart to heart conversation" in which she explained the nature of the business to her. The result was that "she calmed down an awful lot–and understands now that I'm still who I always was–not different from her little girl." In retrospect Jennifer believes that her mother's anger was a way of expressing concern and worry for her well being and that she just did not understand her work. Her older brother, who was a musician, "was the most supportive person in my family, and gave me a lot of advice". He "said he thought I had a lot of potential and I'd be able to do really well and things." He was able to look at stripping " more of it in terms of an art" and suggested to her a strategy for combatting the stereotype saying to her "never let anybody tell you that you're

being exploited because you're not. You're earning money and if anything you're exploiting men's attitudes about women really, you know." The contrast here between her mother's response and that of her brother is marked by her **feelings of being understood**. This theme marks her relationships with others and is related to feelings of support, of being heard, of acceptance, and feeling relief from not being excluded. Looking back on her relationship with her mother, she wishes that her mother could have "been there" to give her advice and support.

Jennifer has found that she has developed a "kind of self confidence" because stripping:

> ...requires different stuff from you–because you're faced with a lot of bad situations in a way. Even just like driving out here was hell. It was hell. My girlfriends car broke down, lost in Saskatoon, and um, dead tired, hadn't slept all night. And I don't know a lot of people who would handle that situation. And you have to. You're there and you have to. And so you learn that you're going to get through things. She feels that in part, this is the result of not having the kind of security around her that people working in "nine to five jobs" have. The theme of independence, developed in childhood, is a key aspect of her being as a stripper expressed here as **self-reliance**. Handling things such as being left alone in a small town without money because a manager refuses to pay her emphasized the importance of self-confidence as she learned to handle difficult situations where circumstances dictated that she must take care of herself.

An important thematic distinction found throughout Jennifer's story is that between **insider and outsider**. I use the term insider here to refer to the feeling of fraternite that Jennifer felt in her relationships with other strippers. The term outsider refers to the feeling of being separate or disconnected from others.

Jennifer has found that in being an exotic dancer "you get a lot of raised eye-brows and cold shoulders." Initially she took some of the negative reactions to heart and would "get a little bit defensive" saying things in response like, "Oh yeah like you're real hot and we say that all the time, that they're just jealous and stuff, that's what you do in the beginning." but eventually she came to understand that these reactions are largely the result of not being

understood and that "eventually you come to understand that they don't know anything about it. They don't understand and so they do that." This understanding of people's reactions to her serves to protect her self by distancing their comments from the personal realm. Her varying reactions to others attacking her, as well as her rationale for not being understood, all function to protect her self. People's stereotypical reactions contribute to her feeling of being an outsider–outside of mainstream society. In feeling like an outsider Jennifer became sensitive to people who are narrow minded, or judgmental, and who were often seen as being hypocritical. Feelings of not being understood contributed to a sense of isolation and disconnection from others and the feeling that she is an outsider. This was also felt in her relationship with her mother who was angry about her stripping and couldn't talk to her about it. It was a source of conflict that left her feeling isolated from her family. It also, however, contributed to feeling a connection with other strippers by virtue of feeling that she was part of a group who shared her experience of being treated as a social outcast. The theme of being in **relationship** is balanced by **isolation**.

The sense of being an insider is seen in the distinction Jennifer makes that "the biggest difference between me and 'normal' quote, unquote, people are relationships" and that as a stripper "you form really close quick attachments because you're alone." She recalls working with her current roommate who "was having a hard time, and was really stressed out, and I went pphhhh , if you need me I'm here. We're friends and if you need me I'm here, and well I guess she needed me." Over time they worked together more frequently and eventually became best friends. Recently Jennifer has reconnected with a stripper after a six year period in which they had not been in contact with each other. Looking back on that relationship she recalls that "I barely remember our experience together" and "there's still this one thing that she's got about me–throwing a hair brush against a wall–and she likes to tease me about it" and its "still ongoing–a joke between the two of us." She further states that "the basis of that friendship regardless of how deep it goes was formed ages ago on very little– she's a true friend." Closeness developed by having "time to talk" in depth in the hours between shows. Openness was the result of being in a situation where "it's hard to feel private when you're having to undress around other people," creating an informal atmosphere. Jennifer further comments that "we don't have to pretend–you're a stripper,

you're ostracized–you've lost a lot of social status–there has to be a lot of real honesty in that" and "if you have to deal with the shame of being a stripper it's a little easier to deal with the shame of–." She found that she could be much more direct and matter of fact about abuse or rape in situations where "there's a recognition of the vulnerability that we all face." For Jennifer certain shared experiences were important to forming relationships. This included the abuse she sufferred in childhood as well as being able to talk about men freely and having her feelings validated. In contrast, she recalls telling an non-stripping girlfriend about her abuse and she "seemed to be a little bit flabbergasted that I could say it that easily." Jennifer notices that the way in which she uses language is in contrast with its use in the outside world and particularly in the use of terms that "are loaded–for me to say something about not spreading my legs all over the place (laughs)– right out of context."

Jennifer has found that relationships with people outside of the business tend to develop over longer periods of time and may have "a long term stability" that relations with strippers lack. With respect to her relationship with strippers Jennifer comments that she feels "close only on one level" where "you're bonded to these people but not on every level. They don't understand you in a different situation. But in work you have a really close relationship. Closer, I think, than most people have with their co-workers." Jennifer clarifies this point with the example of how some of her stripper friends are unable to relate to her role as a university student, and at the same time, friends outside of the business are unable to understand her as a stripper. She speaks to the differences between the groups as reflected by differences in the stock of shared experiences which help form the basis for attachment and understanding in each group. Forming relationships with people outside of the stripping sub-culture also tends to be a more cautious prospect. Jennifer states that she tries to avoid telling people what she does for a living until they get to know her first. This delay serves to disrupt the stereotype, thus protecting her self against premature judgments.

Jennifer, examining her relationships with men, wonders if "I don't have a problem with men anyway. If I have a problem with men because of what I do or if my relationships with men are them having a problem with what I do." Central to this is the issue of trust and the family dynamics established in her family of origin. It is likely that the abuse from her brother as well as her resentment of her father has contributed to her perceived difficulty in

being able to be form close relationships with men. Jennifer also feels that the relationships that other strippers have with their partners have contributed to her suspicion of men because in many cases they are just hanging around the hotel "leeching" off their girlfriends. To her these relationships can have the appearance of "a pimp-prostitute relationship." Jennifer recalls a past relationship with a musician, to whom she was engaged, in which "I had a really good relationship for the first four to six months and I felt really close." Over the course of time the difficulties of planning and being together began to put stress on the relationship. Eventually her partner became increasingly uncomfortable, blaming more and more of their relationship problems on stripping. For instance, "He said that he just couldn't stand listening to someone else say things about me." The problems in the relationship were defined by him as being the result of her dancing. Yet she notes that the relationship was much worse when she was taking time away from dancing and became verbally and emotionally abusive; "He used to just scream at me." Eventually she quit dancing and worked at a regular job and found herself supporting both of them. Soon there after she ended the relationship. Jennifer sees several difficulties in forming relationships because, "You end up being quite independent and I don't think a lot of men appreciate that especially because it has sexual connotations" and "you become so that you're not as dependent on people and some people don't react well to that." She believes that "they have a hard time interpreting the way we attach to people." For example: "If I wanted to go on the road somewhere he wasn't gonna go, he thought that meant I didn't care."

In general, Jennifer states "I've found it difficult to find someone to spend time with." Feelings of being understood are most relevant here in that as a rule Jennifer notes that strippers have a tendency to attach to other entertainers because they have a basis, in their lifestyles, for mutual understanding.

There is an existential loneliness in Jennifer's story as she describes the experience of seeing a film alone:

> ...and so you walk out alone and you go wow isn't that great. In your own head, it's like this is how I felt about it and theres no–there's nothing to come back, there's no agreement, there's no discussion, there's not, there's nothing. Because I really remember feeling empty. I'd seen the Milagro Beanfield War by myself and walked

out feeling like I should have somebody there to talk to about it and they weren't there. And I think that must be a lot of–the way I feel in my experiences generally.

The sense of **isolation** that Jennifer describes reflects her difficulty in finding someone to spend time with. Her life seems to be split between her pragmatic self (which demands that she be independent and self-reliant) and her artistic intellectual side. She states the business does not enhance the intellect. She feels that being an independent woman makes it more difficult to attach to others– to be understood. Thus she finds it difficult to integrate these two aspects of her self structure.

Control and **vulnerability** are themes which are relevant to Jennifer's relationship to customers and her understanding of men in general as reflected by certain values and attitudes that relate to her being as a stripper. These aspects can be seen as interrelated, existing in a dialectical relationship. During her childhood Jennifer developed a mistrust of authority figures who were primarily men. She states that she suffered a certain amount of abuse at the hands of men and for some time felt hatred toward them. Reinforcing these feelings were experiences such as being leered at on the job while working in an office building and having to walk through the "drooling department":

> ...and walking through the drooling department was like being undressed. You might as well have been, they all leered at you–all of them. And I was being paid seven dollars an hour. Well now I go on stage for twenty minutes and everybody looks at me, and it's all very obvious to me what they're doing, and I'm being paid 50 dollars to do this.

Her experience with a boyfriend who was emotionally abusing her found resonance in what she was observing between strippers and their boyfriends who were seen to be taking advantage of their girlfriends: "so you end up being suspect of men too because you think that that's what they're going to do is come around and try to leech off you." In summary, she sees that for many strippers "we already have attitudes about men before we get into the business " and that it is "one of the things that allows us to dance."

Informed by feminist writing Jennifer saw relations between men and women as power relations (though recognizing the existing ideal of equality between the sexes). When

Jennifer found out that men could be aroused by stripping "that frightened me because I've always believed that wasn't true, that that feminist attitude about us making pornography–that we weren't responsible for that." In her view "it's not a sexual experience at all" and she had assumed it was not for men either as she states, "I don't know if I'll ever understand that." She feels that stripping wouldn't work "if there weren't a market already" and "if men didn't have those tendencies already." Jennifer sees social attitudes being responsible for men's views of women as objects "and I think that everybody is responsible for that." She feels that "what I am doing as a dancer certainly doesn't help women's position in the world. But it doesn't hurt it anymore that housewives or women who stay with abusive men or politicians who refuse to give funding to women's shelters." She sees the feminist assumption "that we're being degraded sexually" as not fitting with her experiences: "the whole idea that we're being controlled by men and that we're being degraded by men, for us , I think, is reversed." Similarly with respect to degradation and exploitation she muses that "uh you're more exploited if you're being stuck in the kitchen, barefoot and pregnant, you're exploited, you do work for nothing. You are a sexual object for nothing." In her view she is exploiting mens attitudes towards women. At the same time she recognizes that what they sell may not be "the ideal thing to sell" but it is not different from what Greta Garbo was selling–a view of women promoted by societal values. Sexuality in her view is a natural "part of our humanness and because we've had these Victorian attitudes for too bloody long we pervert what is our own heritage" turning nudity into something that is sinful and dirty. There is a sense of resignation when she suggests that if society is structured that way "then shouldn't I be taking advantage of it?" For Jennifer feminism was seen as "a great criticism of patriarchy" but "doesn't provide any solutions really" and she felt "ambiguous" about it. This feeling is summarized thus: "and as far as control of power goes, a lot of times I'm manipulated by the business–but for the most part I could always not do it–and other women I don't think are in that position."

These attitudes and values are most prominent in Jennifer's relationship with customers in her stage performance:

> As a woman I am in control of my sexuality because I can walk off anytime. Because I can just walk away and shut the whole thing down. And there theyare, for one thing when you're on stage you're practically on a pedestal– there's one of you that all of them are watching. So in that sense you have a certain amount of control. It puts you in a position of power–you're the initiator–to inspire whatever kind of response.

In this sense she views the idea of strippers being controlled by men as being reversed and sees it as a part of what allows her to dance.

Jennifer emphasizes that for her stripping has been therapeutic, relating it to the abuse she suffered in childhood:

> That gave me the kind of control that I certainly never had in my own home growing up. I could never get him away from me. I could never stop him from badgering me. Because it was always poor [name] , right. So that was something that I recognized as definitely being met there–while I was dancing and the freedom to be able to say 'jerks'.

For Jennifer it was important to "come away from a situation where you weren't in control and you were the person being hurt. Now your not in that situation anymore and you are in control of not just a single man but a group." It was important for her to "regain a certain amount of self-confidence in handling men. In that I needed to be in a position of dominance almost." She has found that this need has decreased over the years but was useful in that "I don't understand men any better, but I understand me, and I have more confidence in me, and I feel in control of my sexuality." In her view this sense of control is related to her feeling that she always has the choice to leave or quit if something becomes frustrating or bothers her. Stripping has given Jennifer the context in which she can voice her feelings about men, where they will be accepted, heard, and acknowledged as her truth. This contrasts strongly to her experience at home where speaking about the abuse was not validated. This sense, however, of **control** is also balanced by a realization of **vulnerability**.

Overall Jennifer's experiences on stage were not negative and she liked to "believe that a lot of men are there to just have a beer with the boys and it's something to watch." Though she came to understand that people would react negatively to her due to their

ignorance, there were times when "we become angry when people mouth off. Not always but sometimes." Her reactions depended upon:

> What kind of a day you're having. It depends what kind of a show you're having, if you're having a good show you have a tendency to go hmmm, you know big deal. If you're not having a really good– or if you had a really heavy adrenaline thing happening–if somebody says something to you that offends you, you turn around and you're going to be a little more angry.

In addition there were points during the show " where you feel more vulnerable. It depends what kind of comment it is and how it's said so there's all kinds of different reactions to that; sometimes you turn around and look at them, kind of roll you eyes and go, what grade did you get through?" or sarcastic comebacks such as "I don't come and bother you when you work at McDonalds do I?" At other times she will "just plain ordinarily ignore them completely... and there's some guy who's sulking poor guy you know that's what you get when you're mouthing off." These reactions may even extend to fear if someone attempts to touch her: "you take care of it the fastest way you know how and that's when people get hit." These examples of moments when control turns into feelings of vulnerability, "and so depending on your state of mind, you can become vulnerable because somebody calls you a bitch or pig." Jennifer has a fear of this balance being upset–it was not supposed to happen.

Jennifer finds that men can be "really funny" about what they will feel insulted by, for example, "because you don't smile at them" and "because you don't smile at him and he starts insulting you." The potential hostility of these men was frightening:

> I mean there is that personality out there. They come to see you naked and say nasty things to you–it creeps me out–they're not normal, those ones just frighten me I guess, and so you feel odd at those times.

The balance between control and vulnerability is a "delicate" one in a context where men's behavior is seen as capricious. She had a fear of being vulnerable and feeling that way could be used as a "justification for getting mad at people. I'm in a vulnerable position here goddammit." These comments reveal the possibility that, for men, stripping is a substitution for the lack of a relationship in their lives. If so then getting a personal acknowledgment

would be important to some of them. Becoming vulnerable happens when the distance Jennifer creates through her attitudes and performance is bridged–it becomes personal. In our culture the most personal actions are through touch and they invoke in Jennifer the strongest response. Jennifer summarizes her feelings about her job and the importance of control by the following comment: "It was a very satisfying position to be in , to have support when I said "these guys are being jerks" and I'd have a whole group of women agreeing with me."

The sense of **freedom** that Jennifer refers to above, expressed by her as choice, independence, and control is balanced by **constraint**. For example Jennifer is suspicious of the agents who book dancers. The following comments express her feelings about agents:

> ...you know that they're lying and the rest of it. So like if they're cancelling a booking on you they lie to you about the reasons why they're cancelling on you–or they're trying to make it your fault rather than saying 'because I've decided to favor someone over you'–but I don't know of very many dancers that take them seriously.

Similarly agents and owners have, at times, collaborated to cut the show prices of strippers not taking into consideration their life circumstances (e.g., their sacrifices with respect to their reputation) while doing so. Her relationship with agents is characterized by mistrust. Jennifer resisted their attempts to control her life or manipulate her by compromise or confrontation using whichever tactic she felt that she needed to use.

Jennifer also feels that entry into other occupations are difficult given the constraints of time, travel, and the stereotype. Paradoxically a factor such as travel which was an initial attraction can also become a constraint in maintaining a relationship. Jennifer has taken university courses towards a degree. However to be able to do so and work as a stripper requires that one be booked strictly for day or night shifts making it very difficult to combine the two. Time constraints were felt in relationships where plans could often not be made or carried out because one did not have enough time in between shows to attend a concert.

Throughout the interview there is a distinction between Jennifer's " **real self**" and the **persona** of stripper. For Jennifer though this distinction was a tenuous one. Our

conversation was punctuated with her questioning whether it was her dancing or "is it just me." This was reflected in her identification with feminism (she has taken courses at university in feminism) and her understanding of the political-ideological nature of her work. She recognizes that feminist critiques of her occupation would seem like buying into a male dominated system, but it affords her economic freedom and self-sufficiency "so I have a few things about feminism that I'm very ambiguous about." In spite of her ambivalence she refers to a stripper mode in which she is more assertive, forward, and blunt with people. Stripper mode is a way of being that arises from her being in the stripping context or in relating to others in the stripping sub-culture. It has formed through her life experiences as certain behaviors such as assertiveness, her sense of justice, independence, and attitude structures are all active in this mode of being to a greater degree than "normal."

Jennifer has found that stripper mode or "business mode" may spring to life in other contexts. For instance going to the bar with girlfriends who are not strippers she finds that if a man walks up to her and says,

> "Can I buy you a drink ?" and I turn around and tell him to F.O. my girlfriends is shocked. But it's like I know he's a wiener, theres no point in being nice to him, and why be polite? She doesn't understand that I have had to deal with these men so many times in my life, somebody who's slobbering over your shoulder trying to talk to you and he's going to be rude eventually. So you beat them to the punch.

Her girlfriends see her as "cold and nasty." During her performance on stage this mode was at its most active, keeping her personal self protected and distant from the men. There is a sense of it being a cover for her feelings of vulnerability; if she can be strong and assertive, ready to respond to and handle obnoxious men then vulnerability is less likely to come forth. What is also evident is that vulnerability can be equated with the movement of the real self into the stripping context.

For Jennifer getting into stripper mode:

> ...would be if a dancer I knew walked into the door right now–It's like, Hi how are you? Just the whole thing and the kinds of conversations that you have. Or if I had to be on stage in half an hour, you know I can almost feel that but I can't describe what's different about it–it's um, not quite like edginess but its like a heightened kind

> of awareness–of time, space and um, where things are–like where the car is in the parking lot cause I have to know that when I leave on a moments notice kind of thing. Because I'm always rushing for work, so that– and I'm aware of where the (bar) is from here. It's interesting because I really do have a good sense of where things are in relationship to one another, in terms of the club and stuff like that, the dressing room and how long it would take me to get there–and its an awareness though that–of time then and stuff and how much time I would have to spend doing this.

Inbetween is a part of the lived experience of time during which she has to manage various aspects of her life: "I felt that a lot, time restrictions a lot. Because you spend so much of your time–in between shows, right. Like you do things inbetween shows. Inbetween I don't say In between, like Inbetween is something." From the twenty minutes on stage to the "inbetween" life is lived in bursts of activity that constrain ones existence.

Jennifer's experience on stage is that "for me it's just nudity it's not sexuality at all." She creates an illusion of sexuality, of what that looks like, but sexy does not describe how she feels. Emphasizing this point she states that on stage she is thinking "about what we look like, trying not to fall over, whether or not we should do a pole move now, whether or not our heels are going to break, how slippery the floor is, keeping our balance..." Jennifer states "I was very modest when it came to the floor show–you know they say that thing about keeping a quarter between your knees." Stripper mode for Jennifer is fundamentally an embodied asexual existence.

Jennifer makes the distinction between being a good girl and a bad girl. In Jennifer's view part of becoming a stripper is learning "how not to be a nice girl". In her understanding "not being a good girl, is definitely no worse than putting up with that guy, for fifteen minutes. You know being a bitch to some slobbering drunk is no worse than putting up with him, slobbering on you." Thus, in being a stripper it was "perfectly acceptable for me to be a bitch." Being a bitch meant being in control and having the power to define her own existence for no one tells a bitch what to do or how to define her existence. She remembers a time though when she wouldn't have been so eager to see herself as a bad girl or to accept the definition of being a bad girl. Thus, she feels that earlier she would have defined herself

as being softer, to "try and regain some balance between the good girl/bad girl thing–to combat the stereotype– I'd have to concentrate on those things to sort of counteract what's being told to me."

In contrast to her stripper mode Jennifer sees herself as being "actually very patient with most people." In her everyday life she has noted that people tend to see her as soft spoken and thoughtful. In addition, Jennifer describes herself as "a pretty curious type of person–curious about a whole lot of things–inquisitive you know." She has felt a "lot of frustration in terms of what I know I know, or what I know I'm capable of " since stripping was seen as inhibiting her intellectual development. She feels that while she has tended to be a loner she prefers the company of someone to share experiences with.

Jennifer has found that one's values change when one becomes a stripper. In her experience ones value of money changes. In making "a lot of money" she found herself developing expectations of the kind of life style that can bring. She also found herself valuing appearances. Putting money into hair, nails, tanning, one comes to "know what it feels like to look really good most of the time" however she acknowledges that when she quit "it was refreshing for me–to just become plain Jane".

Jennifer sees herself "on the fringes of so many things"; stripping, university student-feminist, artist-writer, family. In this respect she "never felt normal in the real world." For her an integrated sense of self is difficult to conceive. Her worlds seem quite distinct to her. For example, her friendships tend not to cross sub-cultural boundaries. Her friendships tend to be "singular" because of not having a crowd of friends that know each other well and can share experiences with each other. She finds that few of her friends outside the business would be comfortable in the stripping world. Conversely, few of her stripper friends would be comfortable in a university setting. Thus, she found it difficult to share things from her other roles with either group.

Jennifer's sense of self may be characterized by a splitting or differentiation in which each world has its boundaries and they only cross or converge in special circumstances or with certain individuals. There is also a sense of continuity from childhood in which many aspects of herself such as the need for control, trust and mistrust, vulnerability, sense of justice, and independent mindedness are manifested in her adult relationships in and outside

of the stripping subculture. What her story reveals is that these constructs have different emphases in each context. As a daughter, Jennifer has felt distanced from her mother especially with respect to being a stripper. It was a source of conflict and closed down their communication. With support from family being minimal, self-reliance and a certain amount of isolation was evident. While her relationship with her mother improved after she quit there was still a sense of distance with the problem of her abuse in childhood as the central issue. If control serves to protect the self then one may ask whether it also may isolate the self or invoke feelings of distancing in others. Certainly the lack of continuity in her relationships and roles can be seen to contribute to the feelings of isolation that she has felt. I believe it is likely that the validation that Jennifer experienced as a stripper makes it difficult to leave that life, which she experienced as very satisfying. As a stripper her feelings about the abuse were validated but not so in her family of origin. This makes it difficult both to relate to her family and to begin to put the abuse she suffered behind her since her family continues to avoid the acknowledgement of her feelings.

The role of student and artist-writer which she acknowledges that she loves and that feeds her inquisitive nature, have not been enhanced by her job as a stripper. Even though "dancing was a good answer for me, I could be somewhat creative and pay the bills" it still provided little mental stimulation. There is parallel between her perception of these domains and her view of both parents. She sees her mother as reliable, self sufficient, and responsible. She admires those qualities and views stripping as a way to at least obtain financial security and be responsible for herself. On the other hand she sees her mother's life as boring and cannot see herself in a nine to five job like her mother. Her father who was artistic sparked this interest in her, and then rejected her, offering little support for her efforts as a young artist, and eventually came to be viewed as a failure as father. He was not responsible. Jennifer sees a problem with her talent in that if she takes the risk to develop it she may become less secure–the possibility of being an artist sacrificing financial security is frightening and so "I really resisted my own creativity because I believe then that it means you'll be starving". However, in doing so she rejects her personal expressive side and denies a large part of herself. This has the feeling of a double bind in which one can do neither and

the danger lies in life becoming frustrating and unfulfilling through denial of her potential–being. "Being" on the fringes is less of a risk.

In summary the following themes are prominent in Jennifer's story:

1. In her childhood Jennifer was abused by a brother and her father abandoned the family for a younger woman. This contributed to the development of feelings of mistrust towards authority figures. Self-reliance became a necessity. This also resulted in a strong sense of justice which she invoked in situations where she felt relational integrity was being compromised.
2. Feelings of being understood were evident in her stories of being in relationship. This was a central issue in her relationship with her mother. Trust was a central issue in her relationships with men and became a problem in her relationship with a man to whom she was going to be married.
3. The theme of insider exemplified the way in which Jennifer connected with other strippers. Feelings of being understood are central here. This was especially important to her given her experience of abuse in childhood and her negative experiences with men in relationships and in the work world. She was able to express her feelings about men and abuse and have them validated by the women who became her friends.
4. Relationships with people outside of stripping are marked by caution. Having to deal with the stereotype contributed to the feeling that she was an outsider. Jennifer often lets people get to know her first before revealing her work identity. This helps in protecting the self.
5. The attitudes and values Jennifer developed are summarized thus:

   ·She views men as potentially abusive and has felt anger and frustration towards them. Other than stripping she has found little outlet to voice her feelings about men and have them validated.

   ·Sexuality is seen as a normal human function which societys' attitudes have perverted. She views her job as a display of nudity more than sexuality.

   ·Men's attitudes about women are seen as societal constructions.

·Feminism is seen as a valid criticism of social systems but is without practical solutions.

·She does not support the idea of stripping being degrading or exploitative but rather she is exploiting men's attitudes about women.

·She has independence, financial security, and control over her work which few other women or men possess.

·She sees stripping as improving her position in the social order. It is a tradeoff between the positive benefits versus its negative aspects (i.e., selling of women's image).

7. Control and vulnerability were particularly important to Jennifer as ways of relating to customers. Control was seen as covering over her feelings of vulnerability. There was a fear of being vulnerable that the stripper mode helped to distance her self from. These were prominent themes in her stories of relating to customers. Underlying these processes were a set of attitudes and values and in particular those towards men that had impact on her relationships both in and out of the stripping context.

8. Jennifer's story implicates a distinction between two primary modes of being: the stripper mode or persona and the real self. Jennifer's stripper mode was an asexual mode of being which involved a felt shift in consciousness including her embodied existence. In this mode she became more assertive, aggressive, and self confident. This mode of being was active in distancing herself from the audience. The mode could be drawn upon in "real life" circumstances where being assertive was required. She felt changes in her posture which reflected greater assertiveness. Her sense of time was altered to encompass how long activities took to accomplish–what she calls the inbetween. There was a sense of time-for in this mode. The time framing of her existence was often felt as a constraint.

9. The stripper mode/real self distinction was seen in her identification as good girl/bad girl. Her friends had difficulty understanding her when she was "in mode". They experienced her as distant and cold. Jennifer has come to appreciate the power of the bad girl in her everyday life. Being able to create emotional distance prevented her

from feeling vulnerable. Jennifer felt that control and vulnerability existed in a delicate balance which could be upset by an abusive comment at the wrong time.

10. The freedom that being independent brought as a stripper also contained constraints on her time and contributed to lessened opportunities for relationships.

11. Jennifer has found it difficult to balance the various roles she has in her life (daughter, stripper, student, partner). Currently she has been exploring alternatives to stripping.

Angela's Story

Angela was 28 years old at the time of interviewing. She is the youngest member of an upper middle class family that includes an older sister. Angela's family broke up when she was young with her father moving out of the family home. Her mother eventually remarried. Angela moved out of the family home in her late teens and moved to Hollywood in search of fame and fortune. Angela had no formal dance training though she was involved in choir, drama, and literature in high school. As I sit with her in a restaurant the first thing that I notice is her bubbly, outgoing personality. During the interview her speech is expressive and she is highly animated as if she were performing in a show.

Angela feels that she was on the path to becoming a stripper from the moment she witnessed the film Gypsy Rose Lee as a young child. The following comment speaks to this early period in her life:

> When I was very young practicing in the living room and I really thought this was great. I thought this was a beautiful, neat thing to do. Of course I've always been an actress, you might say all my life, since I was a little girl, putting on plays and skits for the neighborhood kids–for anyone that would watch me. I can even remember once when I was five years old, my sister daring me to take off all my clothes and run across the street where the boys were playing baseball, and I'm like "O-Kay" and I take off all my clothes and I'm out the front door and mom's running after me "Angela, what are you doing, my god!"

From an early age Angela wanted to be a performer of some kind. At the age of 17 she left home, moving to Hollywood with the hope of becoming an actress, singer, writer, or anything pertaining to show business. These incidents reveal that Angela was an attention seeker, impulsive, and not afraid to take risks, reveling in the responses she could obtain from others, whether they be family members, children in the neighborhood, or those at school. These incidents highlight the themes of **attention** seeking and **impulsivity** as central aspects of her being developing from her childhood experiences.

Angela proudly describes her mother as very independent. She was an adopted child and "overcame having a rough childhood." Her mother's marriage fell apart when Angela was five years old. Eventually, her mother able to put herself through law school and has

become successful in business. Angela asserts that "she doesn't w[illegible] to have a thing to do with being dependent on a man ever again." She describes her father as a man focused on "having fun" though he did become successful in real estate. With respect to her becoming a performer Angela comments that there was "a lot of creativity in my family. My grandmother sang on the radio... my father played trumpet... my sister was very artistic with painting and sculptures." Angela lived in a climate of acceptance for creative activity and being a performer; personal expressiveness was valued and encouraged within the family. Angela's attention seeking was sanctioned through creative activities–activities that members of the family were familiar with and active in encouraging. Her family environment encouraged feelings of **support** and **personal expressiveness.**

After her move to Hollywood Angela recalls looking at ads in the paper that were offering 500 dollars per week for strippers, at a time when she was surviving on 125 and "I thought to myself well if I can do that, take off my clothes off in front of people, then I could do anything. That would be that edge, that edge that I would need to go in front of producers and acting auditions." She went to a "nice" office in Beverly Hills and took off her clothes in front of a man who subsequently sent her to a club to perform in an amateur stripping contest. She remembers watching the women sling beer and dancing up on stage, a stark contrast from the glamorous image portrayed in Gypsy Rose Lee. Going up on stage she felt nervous, "I thought I was going to throw up. I mean I don't know it if was nerves or if it was 'Oh my god that's it, now I'm considered scum, low life', –I thought: 'Oh, what would my mother say?'" Winning the contest "changed everything... I felt like I did something, I accomplished something. I was good at it. I was accepted rewarded for it and I liked it." Angela felt a sense of accomplishment, and more important, a feeling that this kind of work fit with who she was. Working in different clubs throughout the area she eventually came upon a place where she encountered a stripper with a gorgeous wardrobe:

> In my eyes, at 18, she was a star, and so when I saw her I realized that I haven't been stripping at all. I've been just slinging beer and taking my clothes off you know (laughs). That's when I finally had the realization what it was I really wanted to do.

These descriptions highlight the importance of Angela's ability to take risks and the feeling of "fit" that characterizes the experience of personal expressiveness. There was also a sense

of her carrying the image of Gypsy Rose Lee in her mind as an ideal image of what a stripper should be like–it was a glamorous, beautiful, seductive image (an **ideal image**). It motivated her to continue and provided her with a sense of recognition when she finally met a feature performer.

Angela's story becomes an adventure as she relates the events that followed. She describes herself at this time as being "very naive, very young and dumb." She was approached by a man who said that he was a manager and would make her into a star. Feeling this was her "golden opportunity" she promptly went out on the road with him. He involved her in a scam cashing cheques, she was charged with a felony, and ended up in jail. She phoned the club and a man came down and posted a bond for her telling her that in return she would have to stay at his place. Her "manager" intervened and rescued her . Travelling with him, they would go into a town and she would get the job while he "did nothing." Eventually he began to threaten her. She remembers turning to a stage mistress at a club for help who promptly locked him out of the theater. He stole her car and when they eventually caught up with him she remembers seeing red and "just grabbed him by the shirt and I just yanked this fat old fart out of my car, and I said 'get the hell down the road' and I kicked him in the butt and that was the last I ever saw of him." Subsequently she found out that it was her husband who had bailed her out of jail. They bought a motorhome and went on the road together. Unfortunately they were so far in debt that the marriage fell apart and she remembers leaving him everything "to get out of the marriage." Men at this point in her story play a secondary role as her concerns are centered on developing her career. Men who had promised to help her out turned out to be untrustworthy, out for themselves, and took advantage of her naivete. She had a lot of difficulty extricating herself from their clutches. Looking back on the experiences though she reframes them in a positive light as necessary events that taught her to be suspicious of them and to develop **self-reliance**. There is a contrast in her story between being naive and dependent on others and developing a street sense–a kind of self confidence in which one is no longer naive and open to manipulation.

Angela had told her parents that she was singing in a band and was out on the road at the time she began to strip. The man she had been having a problem with (her so called manager) had called her parents and told them that she was prostituting herself. Thus, when

they found out that she was stripping they felt relieved. When her sister came out to visit her, Angela was performing in a nice theater and had a beautiful costume and "she thought it was great. My sister started dancing after that." Her father's initial reaction was to bring her back home to work for him as a secretary so that she could learn the real estate business. But Angela was "gung ho. I wanted to do this. I wanted to be the next Gypsy Rose Lee" and told her father "come on dad, don't be crazy! I don't want to do that." She knew her father had accepted what she was doing when he bought her some records related to the central theme in her shows. Her mother first saw her when she was dancing in her home town and was told "better watch the chocolates, if you're going to be doing this, better stop eating the chocolates" because "that's how you make your money". She proceeded to give her daughter advice from a business perspective since she was an attorney. Angela was told not to become involved with drugs or the wrong kind of people. She remembers that "She was real together with it. She didn't have any weird, moral ..." trips to lay on her . Subsequently, both parents have come out to see her perform in contests. The response of her parents was supportive and indicated to her that maintaining connection was important to them. She felt validated in her choice of career when her father bought her the record. Her mother's advice further strengthened her resolve to become a top flight performer. Her mother's ability to look at stripping from a business point of view gave her further validation of her choice–it gave her confidence to pursue her occupation.

Angela's description of how she became a feature highlights the importance of looking out for your own interests, protecting yourself, and being able to interact strategically. Throughout her story her ability to manipulate others perceptions of her indicates that she learned a strategic- pragmatic approach which allowed her to accomplish both of these objectives. Highlighting this point she recalls speaking to a manager at a new club:

> I went in and lied again. I lied "oh I'm a feature, yes I'm a feature, ... And here I come in with my little– I had one real feature costume– and I even got more money. I even conned an extra five bucks a night out of the guy more than the other girls were making.

Her growing success in the stripping business is attributed to the idea of "...embellishing–fake it till you make it as they say. In this business it really works– you have to toot your own horn." The interview is punctuated with stories of how she is able to manipulate others perceptions of her in order to advance her career. She related a number of times that she lied to a manager or producer about what she could do. She is quick to point out, however, that despite being a "bullshit artist" she would always "have to back it up. You can't go out there and say I've got great acts and then not do anything." Later she was approached by [name]magazine to be in a special issue she tells the photographer that they had a magic act incorporating a fire show "and that's how we got into [name]. It's amazing what lying will do in this business." Her ability to manage others impressions of her is balanced here by the confidence she has in her ability to come through when the time comes to perform. She takes risks but she also believes in her self.

Her career really came into focus when she began to work at a real burlesque theater where she was exposed to a number of feature performers as well as a place where the business was "treated as a real art–very much like the Crazy Horse in Paris." The theater was full of magicians including some of the biggest names in the business many of whom were regulars on shows like Johnny Carson's. In this context with other performers she was able to learn the art and craft of creating shows. She also began to develop a **performer's identity** which is central to being a stripper as she understands it. It fits with her image of the ideal stripper Gypsy Rose Lee and is one which is aligned with show business in the form of burlesque theater in the larger sense rather than the sex industry.

Eventually Angela was approached by a producer who was putting together a review for a major men's magazine in Las Vegas. She promptly informed him that she knew how to do a fire act. She immediately "ran to my best friend and asked her 'please teach me how to do the fire' –she taught me in her kitchen." She recognizes, however, that even though she was performing in a Las Vegas show she was still, really an untrained dancer. She, however, was learning from the magicians and other dancers how to do theme shows. She developed a bathtub show which was a copy of a Lily St. Cyr show that her father told her about. Her dummy show was taken from watching a video of a ventriloquist's act. She recalls how this

particular show came into existence through the aid of her friend who had taught her the fire act:

> The dummy was an accident. I remember seeing this ventriloquist on a tape who had a girl dummy and his arm was through the other dummies arm like that and he's going Marsha, Marsha, like this to the dummy and I went yeah, I wonder if I could do that. I stuck my arm in and looked in the mirror and said yeah this will work. So I did it. Winged it for the video and that's how [name] was born.

Another act developed with the help of a magician "he really helped me with the dummy act, really helped me perfect the illusion with that. And he taught me how to do things like the table cloth pull." Through being involved in Las Vegas shows, magic acts, exercise videos, and in particular being in a situation where other performers were present she learned and adopted into her stripping routines a diverse set of skills. In addition the contacts that she made allowed her to be a part of these other related and interconnected ventures.

Angela has found that she likes "to work on new shows and to put on new music. And just improving my dancing and lighting. Putting different things in the act keeps it interesting". Elaborating on this process she further states:

> When I saw the Right Stuff with Sally Rand doing the fan show with the pin spots behind and I thought God that's beautiful! I'd love to do that. Well three years after I finally got my pinspots and my fans– Sometimes I'll go out, I'll get an idea I'll get to work on it boom. Right away I'll get on the phone and start calling up people, getting the tapes made getting the costumes made. A lot of the time it'll just happen little by little. –Like the way I've done most of my shows is they've evolved over the years. The basic idea and the music I've started –it is completely different from the way I'm doing it now.

The creation of new shows is a fundamental part of Angela's identity as a performer. It is this aspect of **personal expressiveness,** beyond her enjoyment of performing itself, which allows her creativity an outlet. It is important to her as a way of maintaining her motivation so that she doesn't get stale. She notes how acts may take years to perfect as new ideas are integrated into her shows.

Angela's stories reveal a growing sense that she is a part of a community of performers who give each other support, and help with each others' shows. Along with the learning of skills there is also the learning of how to promote and sell oneself. She was not isolated from others in her development as a stripper, but remained connected to significant others in her life including family and friends in the entertainment business. The **feeling of community** is central to her understanding of herself as a performer.

Personal relationships have been difficult for Angela. She recalls being involved with a man who was a magician. She states that she was not in love with him but was working closely with him and feeling frustrated about the situation. He was working hard for her doing her lights and working her shows. She on the other hand was feeling "dependent. Because here he is doing everything for me you know." Eventually she ended the relationship but he was still working with her show. She dropped him and went back to a former beau who was a magician and they began working together. Unfortunately, "he was now a big Vegas Star and he didn't want his girlfriend to be one" even though "he got his start working with strippers." And so she quit to please him, however,

> I thought he was a hypocrite. He got his start working in burlesque night clubs. That's how he got started, that's where I met him, it was at that night club. And so, I thought, you know, it's not right. Especially since now by this point I'd really built myself,its become you know a real career for me.

Thus, she took a break away from the business justifying it by her love for him and her need for a break from being on the road. She took the opportunity to do something she had always wanted to do–sing, but after a month she got a call to do Minsky's burlesque show. She tried to compromise by suggesting to her boyfriend that she could be the star stripper in the show while not having to take her top off. Her boyfriend helped her with the show adding acts to it in the tradition of Gypsy Rose Lee. However the management questioned her not taking her top off because, after all, she was the stripper. She altered her act to make it look like an accident that her top slipped down but eventually she felt that this "is really dumb, you know? I mean this is what I do. This is really stupid I'd get a much better reaction if I'd just do this the way I do it." This realization led to their breakup:

> I finally realized I wasn't really in love with him. I was in love with the way I wanted it to be. It was kind of just a fantasy. And I suddenly looked at him and went, this is not the person that I thought he was. You know, it was, he's hypocritical, and he's trying to change me. He doesn't love me. He loves me the way he wants me to be and that's not me. So um, I wasn't happy, it just wasn't going anywhere. I felt like I'm just this bimbo living with him.

Giving up her career in order to live up to her boyfriend's false image Angela felt rejection as she realized that she was an embarrassment to him. She felt the impact of stereotyping through the shame that her boyfriend felt about her being a stripper.

The break up of her relationship led to depression and a cocaine addiction: "I got into it and when I first sat down to do it I said, well I'm just going to do this for like a week. Cause I'm really depressed–I wanted to be numbed out for a while. But the week turned into three months." Angela speaks about burning out, smoking pot before and after every show "and I dont think there's a thing wrong with it, it's totally normal. Isn't everybody stoned?" At the time she was on a local TV show. She met her husband on the show and he was also doing cocaine. They were all part of a group of people from the entertainment community who would party every night until six or seven in the morning. Eventually she was able to quit and her husband began attending AA.

Their relationship has developed as they've worked on the road together. He takes care of the business arrangements while she focuses on the creative aspects. While this has worked to date there has been some concern on the part of her husband when she has been away and also with the behavior of customers. Her husband Jack elaborates further: "I don't mind her doing pictures the money's good. But you see a lot of times you got to understand she just came off stage she's nude, she's beautiful, and you got guys tugging at her every fucking way." After working hard and being tired he found it frustrating for her to put up with having "some drunk asshole leaning on top of her trying to invite her to a drink. And telling her he's shy with girls and if he could have lunch with her it would cure his shyness. I mean you hear everything. You got guys coming up to me and saying rude things." As a stunt performer he found that watching her perform makes him far more nervous than doing some of the dangerous things he was involved in. He also admits that when she goes

out on the road he has found that people will spread rumors about "what is really going on" and one needs to set these aside if the relationship is to succeed. **Trust/mistrust** became a central issue in their relationship with one another.

Angela's descriptions about her friendships and love relations, while a t first galnce seem to indicate that they were secondary in importance to her job, are indicative of the dilemma she was faced with–trying to balance her career with relationships. They suggest that she was fully immersed in her work and in the entertainment community which encompasses her sources of support and caring.

For Angela being a performer also entails being a **professional .** She states "We're easy because we're very, how do you call it, responsible. You know we show up to the gig we don't do drugs, we don't drink, and we show up, were professionals". She elaborates on this point with the following story: She was working at a club and had an appointment at the hairdressers and was late returning and,

> ...the club owner said "where the fuck were you? You were supposed to be here and hour ago." So he tells us to go fuck ourselves and there's no excuses and screw you too. So I had to go to the office and said "look you know I'm real sorry about what happened and we'll do the show for you for free" and after the show I sent over a dozen roses... you're right we're wrong... One thing with the club owner you always let them think that they're right but you always get your own way.

Being a professional entails protecting her reputation as a reliable, consistent performer, a professional. Being the consumate performer, being a professional, also means doing your best shows even when the audience is not responsive as the following statement attests:

> I love to dance and if the audience is giving me any kind of response It'll just push me even harder. Even if they don't give me a response sometimes I just get lost and caught up in the music and my show, and I'll just keep pushing and pushing to draw out every, any little ounce of response that I can from them.

Angela has found that in performing on stage "I don't get a sexual turn on by it at all. I don't. Well it's more of an adrenaline thing, it's more of an adrenaline rush." For Angela performing also includes a self-consciousness which involves being other directed–what do I look like to someone else? In this respect there seems to be a movement or shift in her

embodied existence from being immersed in what she is doing to viewing herself as acting for the benefit of others. Sometimes she forgets that "I'm supposed to be sexy. I sometimes think about that you know. Do I look sexy? Maybe I should slow down here or something." Her focus is on the performance aspect where "I want to do a good show and be entertaining and funny and dance well and the whole bit. But you don't want to lose sight of the fact that you're still a stripper." For her the distinction is that a stripper is supposed to project herself as sexy, beautiful, a turn on. After she had quit for a while she realized that,

> ...this is me I can't deny that I was like this, deny that I was never a stripper and I never did those things. That is me. I worked really hard to develop it. But as far as–I know what you're saying, I'm not Aphrodite , –like that's a character that I have created but its definitely a part of me.

Angela speaks metaphorically about her stage show likening it to acting or being like a detective who, when investigating a case, will try to put themselves into the mind of the criminal. Embedded in her identity as a performer is her stripper persona which adds a dimension of playing at projecting sensuality and attention getting. She believes that stripping can bring out aspects of oneself or allow one to try on behaviors that one would not, under normal circumstances, play with. She mentions her friend Tasha who graduated from a highly regarded University, second from the top of her class. Angela comments: "She wanted to be a stripper, all her life she was the book worm." "She became a stripper because she wanted to see if she could bring out that woman, that sexuality, that sensuality. And she was wonderful." Angela carries this notion of playing with her imagination into her shows as a part of the **stripper persona**.

Angela views stripping as an art "It's not something you can intellectualize, it's a feeling, an emotion. When you look at something beautiful, like Van Gogh or whatever. Art turns you on." In considering stripping as an art her feelings were revealed in watching her best friend perform:

> I always used to cry, my best friend Tasha used to do a champagne show, and that song I did get from her. That was her champagne song and when she retired she passed it down to me. And I used to cry when I watched her do that song, it just–That's what art to me is a feeling .

These feelings are connected to her identity as a performer–as one who has worked with and feels a connection with magicians and other show business people. They are reflected in the fact that she is strongly motivated by the craft involved in putting together her shows.

A part of Angela's identity is the strong value that she places on her appearance. Speaking about the time involved in putting on her shows she comments that is takes her hours to prepare her body:

> It takes me that long just to wash my face, clean my contacts take care of my skin properly you know? It's like it has to be done. I could go (ugh) go to sleep, but then I'd end up with pimply skin and my hair looks like...

Being a feature performer necessitates that a high degree of attention be placed on taking care of her looks. Thus, she will invest both time and money in tanning daily, hairdressing, and nails, all in the interest of maintaining her Gypsy Rose Lee ideal image. In being a feature she feels a pressure to maintain the image since it is expected that she is the star and therefore had better look the part. It is a part of the 'professionalism' that she speaks about with respect to her business. For Angela it is clear that stripping is a business and she has found that many people in and out of the subculture aren't aware of that fact. She is amazed at how easily expenses swallow up her paycheck. With costumes, shoes, makeup, transportation, promotional material, she finds it hard to keep track of her money and where it is all going. People are always after her money: "Everyday this week someone would call up for costumes, jewelry, a guy called up today asking if I wanted to buy a laser beam. Everybody's asking "Give us some", Like fleas biting away. It's what it feels like." In dealing with such people she always keeps in the back of her mind a business sensibility where purchases are carefully evaluated as to whether or not they would add to the show. Angela finds that many people perceive her job as easy, however she knows that they do not see "the ten years that I went through to get there" or the work that goes into a typical day; getting up, getting her hair done, tanning before her first show, procuring promotional material, and sending it out to potential bookings, phoning for bookings, exercising, taking down her sets and the lights at the end of the day. All the customer sees is the finished product which looks easy "because it's well done." She has found life on the road as lonely, hectic, and tiring. It consumes her life in such a way that she loses track of what life is like

on the outside. For example, Angela mentions that they have bought a VCR and have not used it yet even though they've had it for weeks.

Angela believes that her time in show business is limited, that "our career is very short lived. We have to make it and get out." While she realizes that she will have to stop stripping one day she is aware that normal life styles seem boring to her. She has difficulty understanding how people's "main concern is to make their house pretty and when their house is pretty–well then what? Bored to death." Ordinary life to a performer seems boring and unfulfilling. It meets neither her needs for attention or for personal expressiveness. There is a fear that she will end up with a trunk full of costumes and nothing to show for it. She wants to get out before "I get to the point where if I had an audience like that (an unresponsive one) and I just went aww who gives a shit and walked around and went through the motions and didn't even care." Angela recognizes that the stripper is completely integrated into her identity: " the thing is we got it in our blood. Once you're in show business you're there forever." In keeping with this feeling Angela believes that after she retires from performing she will still be doing something connected with show business such as operating her own club.

Angela's being as a stripper can be summarized by the following themes:

1. As a child Angela had a strong need for attention that was nurtured by her family in a supportive setting where her creative talents were developed.
2. In her initial experiences Angela was being taken advantage of and learned how to manage others impressions of her in order to get what she wanted as well as to protect herself from others. It afforded her a sense of control. This was combined with a self assurance that she had the ability to perform when called upon as well as indicating that risk taking was backed up by her belief in her self.
3. Angela's relationships reflected the difficulty she was having trying to balance her career with relationship and in getting her partners to recognize the importance of her work to her. Trust and Mistrust are key themes in her personal relationships.

4. She has developed a professional identity which involves accommodating others in order to protect her reputation as a reliable performer. A top act cannot afford to be labelled as unprofessional.
5. Personal expressiveness is the major factor motivating Angela to be a stripper. It is central to her identity. Angela derives much of her motivation from being able to work on her shows. She has a sense of stripping as a craft or art rather than a sex show.
6. Angela sees herself as part of a larger entertainment community of which strippers are a small part. She sees herself as artistic and creative and stripping allows her to meet those needs. She has a sense of community with her fellow entertainers.
7. While the stripper persona is seen as acting, it is a part of her performer's identity and is a fundamentally integrated part of her self structure. Angela experiences her performance as an asexual mode of being and finds that she has to remind herself that she is supposed to be sexy.

Mary's Story

At the time of the interview Mary is 18 years old and, had only been stripping for less than two months. She is a slight woman and has a quiet, reserved manner. As the interview progresses she becomes more open, shyly revealing aspects of herself. Her voice, as she becomes more confident changes to a more affirmative, feeling laden voice by the end of the interview. Mary has three siblings, a brother and sister who are much younger and older brother who is married. She is currently living with her parents who wanted her to move back home with them when she started stripping.

It was during her last year of high school that Mary began to give serious consideration to becoming a stripper. Her circle of friends had encouraged her, over the course of the year, to enter wet T-shirt contests which she always won. This led them to encourage her to enter an amateur stripping contest held at a local bar. When she entered the contest she went down to the bar with a group of friends who cheered her on and offered her their support: "I wouldn't have been able to do it myself, but they were there to support me and I did it and I was fine." While her initial experiences reveal a **need for support** she also demonstrated a strong **need for attention** even though she describes herself and presents herself as shy.

Mary remembers telling her parents she wanted to be a stripper, but they kept shrugging it off, not taking her seriously. They were worried that she would get involved with drugs and alcohol. Her belief is that one can succeed in the business if "you keep your head up high above all the drugs and the alcohol and stuff and you keep your head on straight." In spite of her parents' concerns Mary began stripping. Her parents, once they had accepted the fact that she was going to become a stripper, asked her to move back home, telling her that "If you're going to do this we would prefer if you lived in our home instead of somewhere else so we'd know where you are" (she was living with a boyfriend at the time). Describing her family as close, she was worried that "it was going to be so hard because if they weren't going to accept me doing it then tension was gonna be there all the time." Also revealed is a sense that her self-esteem and confidence are dependent upon a **need for other's approval**. Moving back home has worked out well for her– allowing her to find a balance between her need to feel secure and to become more autonomous.

Now that her parents are supportive they have become directly involved in her occupation by giving her ideas, watching her shows, and providing her with feedback. This is an unusual occurrence and other strippers have been telling her that "they find it so weird." She has also had her brother and his wife as well as an aunt and some of her cousins watch her show. In fact, all of her family knows what she is doing. Her grandmothers reacted by saying "fine if you want to do that, just be smart about it–Watch yourself, and don't trust anybody." Her parents have also been giving her financial advice to make sure that she puts away money into a bank account set up for her by her mother. Perhaps even more unusual was the fact that her father was with her to see all her shows for the first two weeks that she was dancing. This was important because he was "there for me because I didn't want to do it on my own– If I needed something or I needed to talk about something he was there for me so it was much easier." Overall being able to be open and honest about her stripping with her family has provided her with a strong feeling of security and connectedness. Receiving **support** and remaining **connected** to her family were primary concerns for her as she entered the world of stripping.

Mary recalls thinking that stripping for a living would be "easy money." Her perception was that it was just walking around, not really dancing. The hardest part for her, because she describes herself as being shy, would be getting naked in front of men. She also thought the women would be "really sleazy" but instead has found that "you got really nice girls that are in the business." Thus, she found stripping to be both less threatening and more challenging than she initially expected.

Mary's first show was early in the day so there weren't many customers watching her. She remembers that she was shaking before going up and she still shakes sometimes both before her show and, at times, on stage as well. She found out from more experienced strippers that even four or five years later some of them still shake. Her current understanding is that it is part of the "adrenaline rush" accompanying performance. During her first week Mary remembers that she was very nervous and "I had times where I'd come off the stage crying cause it was hard." She further states that,

It really depends on how the crowd is responding. If they really respond, like it really affects you and how the crowd is, and if they're real dead and stuff. I always thought well they didn't like me, and it's not always like that–some are dead crowds.

In hindsight she realizes that some crowds just do not respond that much for reasons that have little to do with her. Uncertain of how she appears to others she requires approval and attention. This **self-consciousness** involves a monitoring of herself to determine if she has met with her internalized expectations that the audience should like her.

Mary finds herself increasingly less conscious of herself on stage and she has learned the importance of making eye contact. She learned how to strike up conversations with patrons because it makes her "feel better". She has noticed that smiling invites a reciprocal response: "because if I don't smile then I don't look then it makes me feel very nervous–so I talk to them and say hi" and "are you boys having fun" because "when they talk back it–it's weird because I feel that they're not strangers anymore–but they are." In her present understanding "if they talk to me then they'll like me–so they accept me." At this stage the crowd's approval is important to her self-confidence as a performer.

These factors are related to her need to feel accepted by the crowd and that by talking to them a more personal contact is made and a more positive response is forthcoming. During her first few weeks Mary was very self-conscious of herself on stage. She worried about what she looked like a..d what others though of her performances. This is reflected in her comments about coming off the stage feeling bad about her performance as she interpreted the crowd's response as a lack of acceptance of her. Mary's initial self consciousness reflects the presence of the theme of her need for **acceptance**.

Mary finds herself increasingly able to let things go rather than become overly upset or dwelling on them. In her present understanding, bad shows, bad crowds, and negative audience behavior can happen to anyone and are seen as part of the job. She has learned that you need to let things go or else "you're not going to get anywhere." For example, recently a young man in the bar asked her "'are you going back to school this year'? I said 'why'? he said 'you look like you should be in grade seven'. I'm like oh whatever 'you look like you're twelve or thirteen so'..." Thus she finds that she is able to be **assertive** in situations that require her to protect herself. Previously if someone would make a comment to her she

would take it personally and let it get to her, worrying about what that meant about her show. Other behaviors like men throwing pennies on stage would make her angry but now she just throws them back and calmly walks away. Her initial self doubts have been replaced by her recognition that "guys were just being jerks. Guys like to be jerks." She has also learned that men can be vicious and abusive: "and they heat up loonies too and I've had that done to me." Mary has also found men to be very forward and aggressive : "I've had guys come up to me and um wanting to kiss me– it's like 'sorry I don't even know you' – It feels odd because–They'd have enough nerve to come up and ask you." This has left her wondering "what can you think about them? They're very obnoxious, they don't care what they do or what people think." These incidents have resulted in her seeing men as "jerks" and potentially dangerous. Mary's story began with her descriptions of herself as naive, and subject to the responses of others. As our conversation continued her voice became increasingly strong, mirroring a change in her self descriptions which reflected a self that is more assertive, more in control of how she views herself. Her assertiveness reflects Mary's growth in her self-reliance. It also may reflect the formation of a stripper identity as she increasingly is differentiating her stripper self from her customary way of being. This is seen by the encroachment into her consciousness of different bodily perceptions which will be described.

Mary has no formal dancing background or other activity related to dancing or drama. She has been getting help with her shows from her agents as well as an experienced stripper with whom she had made friends. She thinks that most of her improvement is coming from simply observing others and trying things out on her own between shows. In her first couple of weeks she was paying particular attention to how one moves in five inch heels while currently she is concentrating on her floor show and on pole work. She has noticed that she is "fast right now... I haven't had time to slow down yet." Other dancers have told her "oh you're so fast you have to slow down and act sexy." She speculates that this is happening because she has chosen fast music.

As noted previously Mary had been living with a boyfriend at the time she began to strip and states that she lost him because of the job. It was her first relationship however, he had been married twice. She remembers that he warned her that he would leave if she began

stripping. Her boyfriend was a wrestler and she describes him as being narcissistic always watching videos of himself. She describes him as a "very insecure person". He began to accuse her of cheating on him, asking her why she would come late or suggesting that when she was on the road she was with someone else. He would tell her "there's no way you can go off for two weeks somewhere and not cheat on me." She found this to be ironic since he was a wrestler and went on frequent road trips himself. She began to believe that he was doing this to cover up his own infidelity. She states, "It made me mad at first but eventually I just got sick of it." She remembers coming home after her shows wanting to share her day with him and he would not listen to her but instead would expect her to listen to how his wrestling was going. She remembers one time when he came to see her at work he just went home without saying anything to her. Her friends at the time were telling her "you know, well I think he's just using you– cause that's another thing, he always got money off me too". Encouraged by her friends she told him that it would be better if they do not see each other thus ending the relationship. At present she thinks "its better that you don't have a boyfriend in this business anyway." Issues of **Trust and Mistrust** mark her present views of men as she realizes they can be obnoxious, potentially violent "jerks."

She has found that being on the road she doesn't have time for relationships and she has also lost touch with many of her friends. She finds it difficult to form relationships since the amount of time you do have between shows does not allow one to do much visiting. Further, since Sundays are the only day she has off she likes to just relax and get her things ready for work on Monday. Thus, she has found being on the road "really lonely" and has found out that many of her co-workers also find it lonely. At present, she spends much of her time in her room reading books or magazines, doing exercises or watching TV. She is finding it hard to be away from her family; "the first night I was up here in [city] I cried the whole night." She finds herself calling home a lot "just so I can hear that voice that makes me feel better." Hotel life has been boring to her and she is beginning to eat junk food. She says that she keeps to herself because she had heard that getting involved and partying with the other dancers is "not a good thing to do." She worries that if she spent time going out to bars she would end up missing or being late for a show. It is her observation that people who party end up missing their shows and sleeping in because "they had a bad hangover and

couldn't make it." Recently, however, she has become friends with a dancer who she feels she can trust. This is the only dancer she has gone out with and she was able to have some fun on that occasion. At this point, Mary is still dependent upon her family for love, support, and reassurance. Maintaining close contact with them is important to quell her feelings of loneliness. In her descriptions Mary's need for feeling secure makes it difficult to take the risk involved in trusting people she does not know to form new relationships. Trust is reserved primarily for family members. **Relationship and isolation** (as expressed by her as feeling lonely) are primary themes in the formation of her identity. She is becoming increasingly comfortable in the stripping setting occasionally letting down her guard with her co-workers.

In spite of the loneliness Mary is making a few friends in the business. She states that each week she makes at least one new friend though she feels close to only two of the women so far. One of them, who she met during her first week of stripping, lent her costumes and music and gave her advice on how to do things. Now when she meets the other dancers at the beginning of the week she will introduce herself letting them know that she would like to see them to talk or watch television. She finds that the conversations generally revolve around costumes, shows, makeup, music–a lot of talk revolving around the business. She finds that she does not open up easily regarding her personal life but with the two she does know she is able to "because you're much closer and you trust more." As a recent example of this new found openness she found herself talking to a dancer who also had a boyfriend that was a wrestler and who had also ended her relationship.

Mary sees herself as a shy, somewhat insecure person; "I always–was a person to suck up to people and stuff but– this changes you. It makes you more secure about yourself." Mary feels that she is becoming more assertive since she started dancing and despite people telling her it's degrading she feels "better about herself". She states "I can stand up for myself now much easier than I would have, like two months ago." Mary states than when she was going to school she felt intimidated by boys, she did not know how to respond to them; "I wouldn't be able to talk back, or seem to get the right words out of my mouth, just ignore it and get mad". Now she finds that she can come up to a "cute guy" and talk to him. She is able to assert herself with customers; "look you're bugging me go away–and I'm not

afraid to say it." This is in contrast to her first few weeks when she would try to be nice and she would just take it. Along with being more assertive her impression of men is changing. She has recognized that men "like to be jerks". She can not understand how they have the nerve to ask her for "her price" or for a kiss or a hug. She states "what can you think about them right.. they're very obnoxious they don't care what they do or what people think." She does not understand how some men can come to the bar in the morning and just sit there all day watching dancers and throwing away their money. Mary also finds herself increasingly fearful of men. She notes that in going to the parking lot she always has her mace in hand and though she feels more confident in her self she has become more conscious for her own safety. She has taken her grandmothers advice, not to trust anyone, to heart.

While the distinctions between a stripper persona and her real self are not that strong at present there is a growing differentiation in her personality as she finds herself becoming more assertive, less shy, able to approach people, and less afraid of what people think about her. She appears to be integrating these elements into her self as opposed to working at keeping them separate. This is experienced as a growing confidence in her self and is manifested throughout our conversation with the phrase "I feel better about myself." It also reflects an increased trust in how she feels rather than being subject to the evaluations of others. She is able to trust her bodily feelings and is using them in making judgments on how to act.

Mary recalls being self-conscious about her body when she first started dancing. She found herself sucking in her stomach before going on stage and was always "insecure about my boobs. Everyone said I had nice boobs and I always thought I didn't. " She was afraid that they were too small and now notices that since she started to strip "I've lost a lot of baby fat–I'm starting to tone up now and it makes me feel a whole lot better about myself." These changes don't bother her anymore and she has become more comfortable with her body as she feels herself becoming stronger. She has also developed attitudes about breast implants "If a girl wants to have fake boobs and it will make her feel better then she should do it–If mine even started sagging or you know getting ugly I'd get it done with out even thinking twice." **Appearances** are starting to be highly valued in her existence as she becomes less

self-conscious, more assertive, and is taking pride in her body. She has become more accepting of how she looks and feels about herself.

Just before entering her last year of high school Mary was diagnosed as being a manic-depressive and spent six months on medication. She feels that becoming a stripper has transformed her: "I felt better about myself. I was down here and it just got me over that hump and now nothing can get me down anymore." Being on medication she felt "out of it" much of the time she "didn't remember what was going on during the day". She found that it was difficult to "get out of it once you're in it". This concerned her mother who eventually stopped giving her the medication "cause she wanted to see how I would do without the pills." She found it frightening when "you gotta rely on pills all the time. You don't have to but your body thinks you have to." Thus, coming off the medication was very difficult and she found herself stashing pills, needing the drugs just to be able "to feel something." She remembers crying over nothing and being unable to get to sleep at night. At first when her mother stopped the medication it didn't seem to help. However,when she started stripping she was forced to stop taking medication "cause I had to have my mind straight... to know what I was doing on stage." Now she feels that she "could do anything on my own if I wanted to." In getting off the medication Mary found that she could rely more on her self and that how she felt was more in her control. A growing sense of **control** is related to her increasing independence, more confident that she is capable of managing her life.

Before interviewing her I had watched Mary perform and she was very curious about what I thought about her show. When I told her that I thought that she was doing very well she replied that she asks everyone about her show because she likes to get feedback, using it to learn and improve. Mary sees herself being in the business for a long time. She has set goals for herself wanting to buy a house and invest in bonds to "get me on my feet afterwards cause I know this ain't gonna be here all the time." She realizes "if you don't set goals and you don't take this seriously you know if in four years you have no money in the bank or you have no where to live or you look back and your life... you have nothing to show for it." She feels that because you have to deal with so much, you should have something to show for it at the end. What is revealed here is that in spite of little previous exploration of other options for employment she has invested herself fully into stripping as a career.

When Mary began stripping she had heard a lot of bad things about agents about "how sleazy they can be." Her experience, however, has been that they have been helpful to her and have, for the most part, given her bookings when she has wanted them and tried to get her more money when she wanted it. So far they haven't "screwed me around yet, like I know they have with some girls." She is prepared to work with them as long as they reciprocate in kind. Though she sees her current relationship with her agent as more of a friendship, since he will visit her, watch her show, and give her advice, there is also a wariness that is evident in her voice as she seems to be anticipating a time when this relationship will change.

With DJ's her relationships have been good except in one case with a particular female DJ who was rude to her. Mary believes that this woman might have been jealous of her. The 'rude' comments that the DJ's make about strippers while they are on stage are not taken seriously by Mary instead "it makes me feel like they're breaking the ice kind of thing." Waitresses she finds can be "really snotty." Again she sees this as jealousy. She contrasts waitresses who have stripped who are "really nice" with ones that haven't who "are very rude to you and look down on you." It is not only waitresses that have made her feel looked down upon–she has also felt this from friends and relatives who have told her "you're degrading yourself... how could you do that?" Her feelings about their responses are summed in the following comment: "phhh it's not degrading it's perfectly natural to me–cause I don't feel degraded at all." She found some of her friends at school gave her similar responses with the result that she "got a bad name." Along with getting a bad name came negative comments: "everyone's like oh you're a peeler hey, –do you spread for everybody." Others have just stopped talking to her. This did allow her to find out who her real friends were. These people treated her the same as they always had. Faced with the stereotype, Mary believes that many are simply jealous of her however, there is some acknowledgement that they do not understand her experience as she notices that there is a discrepancy between their interpretation of her occupation and her own lived experiences. These interactions result in her feeling like an **outsider.**

As noted above, Mary has been very cautious about forming relationships. A large part of Mary's secretiveness regarding her personal life has to do with the fact that she

defines herself as a bisexual. She began dating girls in high school and remembers that she didn't think she had any gay friends in school until she broke up with her girlfriend which prompted another friend of hers to hit on her. She states that, at the time, "I had no idea." At the present time she does not know if women in the stripping business are bisexual though she has heard from other strippers that up to 70% are. She speculates that "they are so open with themselves like sexual wise"; you're "with women all the time and you're so comfortable with your body." It is her experience that women can be closer to each other than is possible between a man and a woman. She finds that, "I can talk to them about different things than I ever could with a guy." Mary notices that her responses to kissing are different with a woman: "when I kiss a girl, tingles go all through my body but when I kiss a guy it's just, you know, a kiss." Mary finds that she can look at a guy and think he's "hot" but with a girl she takes the time to make friends with them first. She emphasizes that the difference is at the level of her bodily experiences: "my body feels different with a girl than with a guy. It's my body you know. It's not my head or anything it's my whole body. Like my heart it's everything." At present though she feels "totally in my own world. I'm not looking like I always used to look for relationships because I needed that, but now I'm too busy. I don't need that." She adds, "I don't hit on anybody cause I don't know, I have a weird taste in women... they always have to have short hair and be butchy." This is one subject that she doesn't talk to her parents about even though she had mentioned it to them. She is worried that it would hurt them so she doesn't bring it up. Interestingly she sees herself getting married (to a man) and raising a family which contradicts the strong feelings she has towards women at this time. At present she finds it very confusing trying to understand why she is so attracted to women–her **sex role orientation** can be described as **confused.** Her recent interactions with men have been negative and this impression is reinforced by her growing understanding of men in the stripping context as rude, jerks, and dangerous. This has led her to feel more comfortable and closer to women since she knows she can share her feelings with them easily and in safety.

There is a contrast in Mary between her self description as shy and insecure and her acknowledgement that in school she was an attention seeker. She states: "I always wanted to be noticed... I got tatoos when I was sixteen... I love it." In addition she recognizes that

in school "I never spoke my mind or what I thought cause I was scared of what people would think about me." Now she can speak her mind and does so all the time.

Mary is also aware that she feels differently in her body now as she states, "I'll just be standing in the shopping mall or something and I'll kind of do a step or something like a dance move or something and it just comes like without me even thinking." When dancing at the bar with a girlfriend she finds herself dancing like she would be on stage. She notices that she walks differently now with a more pronounced arch in her back with her chest sticking out. She notices other differences in her bodily comportment such as when she is wearing a long t-shirt and has to bend over she will just do it without thinking, whereas before she would have held the shirt down. She catches herself doing this at times and realizes that it can be embarrassing to others. She illustrates this point with the example of answering the door for the pizza man in her underwear. Still, in spite of noticing these differences Mary does not distinguish between who she is on stage and who she is in her "real" life. On stage "I act really friendly and shy, but I make eye contact and I smile, but I'm still shy, and I try to look as innocent as I can, and that's what I do in person." She recognizes that she has tried to "leave that life on stage" but it has required conscious effort. I suggest that Mary is describing the process of differentiation in her self structure. This may represent the early stages of the formation of a stripper persona as she finds herself feeling differently and moving differently than she does in her everyday life.

In summary the following thematic distinctions were found to be prominent in Mary's story:

1. Mary has a strong need for support, approval, and attention. These themes were prominent in her descriptions of her self both in and after her childhood.
2. Her initial experiences were characterized by a self-consciousness related to her need for approval.
3. Trust and Mistrust were issues in her personal relationships.
4. Mary demonstrates a growing independence as she differentiates from her family of origin. Her family in keeping her close and connected to them allows her to do so within the security and familiarity of family.

5. Control is an important aspect within the stripping context it allows her to feel good about herself. The control and independence are often seen as manifested in her being able to assert herself. Stripping is changing her self- structure.
6. Mary has developed negative attitudes about men through her experiences as a stripper and in her personal life. They are seen as aggressive, rude, and potentially violent. She sees people's hostility towards her as jealousy.
7. Mary is increasingly exploring her sex role orientation and identifies herself as a bisexual. At present, however, she is unwilling to explore the opportunities for same sex relationships within the stripping community. At present she wants to focus on making money as she sees relationships as a potential problem.
8. Mary feels differently about herself as a stripper. This has manifested itself in her bodily comportment. In addition she has come to value appearances.
9. Mary sees stripping as a career and is working hard and using the advice of her parents to do it right. Doing it right involves financial planning and sticking one one's goals.

Lee's Story

Lee is 19 years old and has been dancing for approximately a year at the time of the interview. Lee is a petite, soft spoken, young woman. As the interview progresses she becomes more animated, her voice increases in volume (though not loud), and she becomes more expressive emotionally. We meet in the early evening in the hotel restaurant during a long break between the supper show and the last show of the day. Lee is an only child currently living at home with her parents.

Lee and her best friend began dancing at the same time after having been introduced to an agent by another dancer. She remembers writing their final exams in high school pushing each other to finish quickly since they had to go to work. The first time she stripped was at an amateur contest. She was scared and remembers that she "drank, and drank, and drank before that–I don't even remember my show that night. It was terrible." She had never seen a stripper until that night and didn't know what to do up on stage. She remembers following the instructions of the DJ who prompted her to take off clothing at the appropriate moments. Lee has no background in dance or drama.

Lee had been trying to convince her parents about stripping during the course of her last year in high school: "Oh God. I'd been talking to them for a long time and they didn't want to hear it" saying "no way, you're not doing that. Don't even think about it." Her father expressed the view that "you'll make lots of money and then once you can't do it anymore–a regular job won't be good enough then you'll start prostituting yourself." Drugs were a concern of both parents and she recalls her mother saying that it was sleazy, while Lee was feeling that "she didn't know anything about it then." Knowing that her parents disapproved of stripping "the first week I did it they didn't know. I told them I'd got a job in a bar–they were so set against it and I wanted to do it so...". She knew, however, that she couldn't keep lying about it so she quit after her first week. A couple of months later, when her parents left for vacation she worked again quitting upon their return. At this time though, she was more insistent about stripping, pressuring them with the advantages of seeing the world, the money, and learning new things; though her parents still voiced the same concerns, they eventually relented and she began stripping in earnest. Her parents allowed her to remain at home, but stated that "we don't want to hear about it. Don't talk to us about it, we don't want

to be involved." Lee understood her parents reaction as protectiveness because she was their only child. Lee recalls her first few weeks as being "scary" because she didn't know how to dance. Eventually she picked up things from other strippers. She recalls that she was well received by patrons "cause I was innocent looking, I guess." She was particularly self-conscious at this time wondering "what people were thinking of – what do I look like?, do I look stupid– Oh god! Am I going to fall?" and imagining the worst case scenario (falling off her five inch heels). She likens the experience to that of going up for an important speech in front of a large audience and then forgetting what you were going to speak about.

Less than a year later Lee is comfortable with her home life and enjoys her parents support. They have even come to watch her shows. She remembers the first time this happened when she was in a contest. She found herself trying a little harder to impress them in order to convince them that she was doing well and though she felt that she had a poor show she found that they were impressed by "how I carried myself." In her description of her relationship with her parents she calls them her "best friends". She found that their acceptance of her dancing depended on them being able to understand her perspective and that now "they understand that it is just a job." She did recognize their concerns though: "I'm an only child–they don't want to loose their only child–they're proud of me–that I'm keeping my head on my shoulders and doing it right." Feelings of **support and connection** describe Lee's relationship with her family.

Lee states that as an only child she enjoyed being the center of attention and remembers always wanting to be a singer, actress, or model or "something where somebody's looking at you." She emphasizes that, "You're the center of attention. That's what I wanted." Interestingly her mother mentioned to her that at a very young age she had indicated that she wanted to be a stripper. She remembers always being comfortable with her body and that, with nudity, "It's nothing in my family." Lee defines what she does as "entertaining people and that's what always got me off–that's what I think dancers are." She sees herself as an entertainer but on a much smaller scale than rock or movie stars. She also notes that many strippers associate with other entertainers such as musicians, wrestlers, or male dancers and tend to go out with them. Lee has a **need for attention** which is central to understanding her experience of being a stripper.

At the time she began to strip, she was dating a man who wasn't in the business and "he couldn't handle me being away, he hated it." When she was on the road she found that he was doubting her, asking himself "Is she being faithful?" It made her angry when this occurred, that he did not trust her, putting her "through the third degree" every time she came home, with comments such as "Were you screwing around? Were you partying? Oh! He was terrible." At the time he was not working and she was out "trying to make money for us, we were engaged at the time." They fought about her occupation because "he didn't understand that it takes a lot of money to get started in this business." He could not understand what she was doing "with all that money", not understanding that stripping had become a business from her perspective. There was a sense of conflict between her growing independence and her partner's understanding of their relationship and his role in it. **Trust and Mistrust** were the prominent themes found in her description of relationship.

Investing in the business is important to Lee as she recognizes that the clubs want bigger and better costumes, thus, as Lee states, "it takes money to make money." She finds it tiresome that there seem to be so many people trying to get her to spend her money: "It's always money, money, money. Actually you get sick of it." Lee mentions that though she makes a considerable amount of money she has found it hard to save. Overall she has the feeling that after expenses she is not really being paid that much. This awareness came to light in conversation with a secretary who had recently retired from stripping who found that because she had none of the expenses a stripper faces she was able to save more money than before. Lee believes that it will take some time to adjust before she can control her spending.

Lee is investing time into improving her show by learning new dance moves, improving her pole work, and her floor show. This practice is all informal: "with my girlfriends kinda, we've been kind of teaching each other things because we both started at the same time, like she'll say 'look at this, what I learned' and I'll go 'look what I learned' and we kind of copy off each other." While she is not a fan of music videos she finds herself watching "the ones with good dancers in them" such as Paula Abdul and Janet Jackson. She also wants to take dancing lessons because in her words, "I can't dance a step." These statements reveal the lack of any formal training that may relate to her work.

Lee finds that life on the road is "really lonely most of the time." To combat the loneliness and boredom she will "read a lot, um, I'm into a lot of spiritual things like The Power Within –I read books on crystals and self help books." She is very interested in growth and transformation believing that "you can be so much better if you love yourself–You can change your whole life just through your subconscious mind, just that your patterns of thinking, the way you talk to people, the things you listen to, take in... ." Lee defines the spiritual side as being "one with yourself– loving yourself", and is using her newly acquired knowledge to combat the negativity in the business. She believes that "all the bad things people say to you will make your conscious mind start to believe it." Thus, she does "a lot of affirmation like where you say, um, I love myself and I'm good–I believe you always have to do that for yourself." Patrons often make rude comments about women's bodies and saying "nice this or nice that" (referring to body parts) and she tries to ignore them. She also found that "you get guys that say things like that and you get the guys that say that was a really good show I really enjoyed the dancing" and "that's so much more important than the guy that's sitting in the front row that only wants one thing." She gears the performance for "the ones out there that want to see me dance" rather than catering to those interested in the "one thing." Lee states that, "I always try to look for a friendly face" and she understands that "it's like the boys night out" and so "you can kind of get into it with them–just joke around with them." She is ambiguous about her reactions to them stating that "I don't really pay that much attention to them, I do but I don't." She will "look at them and smile." The loners in the crowd, however, make her wonder; "What are you here for? Do you have a job?" To keep herself in a positive frame of mind she works to engage the audience: "I clap and I holler YAY! they'll go Yay" and emphasizes the importance of "just always look happy, you know tease them with your clothes you know you'll unzip your zipper "yeah do you want me to? they'll go yeah! and I'll go no (laughs)." There are times though when she is in a bad mood and she will "usually forget all about my stuff when I'm on stage or I'll pick music that mellows my mood or music that I really like if I'm in a bad mood." Lee understands that men are capable of being rude and interested in "one thing." She is forming a **negative attitude towards men** that is tempered by her attempts to ward off the negativity by self affirmation and gearing her shows for those that appreciate a

performance rather than a sexual display. These comments also reveal that Lee sees herself primarily as an entertainer.

Lee believes that on stage her job is to "just go up there and have fun too." It is consistent with her view of herself as an entertainer. In her logic, if the crowd is happy, the owners will be happy, and you have done your job. She has noticed that smiling seems to have a strong effect on the crowd. She does, however, draw a distinction between what she is willing to do and what she considers to be classless. Thus she states, "I'm not going to go on stage and do anything gross or slutty–I try not to spread a lot during my show–I do sometimes, like if I'm making money I do." She is able to do this when she is having "fun with the show" not as an attempt to get customers to throw loonies at her. But, sometimes if she is broke she may work on getting the customers to tip her. She would prefer people to simply tell her that they enjoyed her show–that they like her show in general–her performance, not her body or parts of her body, and just simply give her a tip. Lee has developed a standard for customer decorum in which, for her, a respectful response is applause for the quality of the show, not the display of her body parts.

The aspects of her job that she does enjoy are travelling and meeting people. She states that, " you meet all different kinds of characters–so many guys, bands especially come to watch. Soap opera people, wrestlers, hockey players, football players." She believes that these people are there "because they like to meet the girls, they can relate to each other" by virtue of the fact that both are entertainers. She thinks, in particular, the travelling aspect is related to the reason why so many dancers go out with musicians, "they want a girl that'll understand that they have to be away all the time". As well as understanding that "she's doing a job, she's gonna talk to guys–cause they do the same." Thus, she has found that "it's hard to have a relationship with anyone outside of the business" because they don't understand that talking to men, getting tips, flirting with the audience, is all part of the stripper's routine. She believes that men may interpret her on the job behavior as an indicator that something else is going on and so they feel slighted. This is the reason that Lee's recent relationship broke up. Though she mentions that they were already having problems not related to stripping, it was also apparent to her that she "was growing" and he was not and was "jealous" of that. She found that when they argued he would say things like "Oh go talk

to your stripper buddies, go spread your legs for all the guys you see." At present she is going out with a male dancer and is much happier. **Being understood** is an important part of the **trust/mistrust** issue. As Lee has observed the difference between being able to relate to another entertainer versus a man outside the entertainment business.

Lee notices that there is quite a difference between her friendships with those in the business than with others who are not. Her "outside" friends don't understand her as a stripper, and she finds that she is unable to share that part of her life with them. She also notices that when she goes out, particularly with her girlfriends, "they'll go 'oh well she has an attitude'–cause she's a dancer ". She feels that they have this attitude towards her "because they don't understand what I'm doing". When she is with her friends she does not want to talk to others because she is there "with these people, I want to talk to my friends." People approaching her don't understand her abrupt response. Though she doesn't believe that she treats her friends differently she believes that she has "grown" and feels that she acts "much older than them now." She is adamant about not wanting to deal with men in the bar when going out socially because "we get that every day– and it gets tiring." She believes that those that say she has changed her attitude are relating to her that way because of what she does more than any change in her. She does acknowledge though that "to a certain point, when you go to the bar, you do act a little bit snotty because you're around people all the time and you don't like it when people come up to you all the time and bother you." Lee has found that in dealing with people outside of the business the stereotype is prevalent; resulting in feelings of **exclusion** and requires that she take steps to protect oneself. Putting on an attitude is a part of this process. It puts distance between her and those who are bothering her. The distinction between **insider and outsider** is also relevant here. Feeling excluded is the mark of being an outsider–of not being part of the group.

Lee has found that as a stripper you make friends quickly, "you make a friend for the week, you get close to somebody, and then it's like a new week." When I press her further she states "you go out with the person, you sit in the room and talk, talk, talk about everything" and then it ends abruptly. She finds that "dancers are very open people they'll tell you their whole life story" and "you promise to keep in touch." The closeness involves sl.aring common experiences as well as offering support in an acknowledgement that they

are alone together. There is a feeling that they are in the same boat and have only each other for that short time. Thus, family problems, boyfriend troubles, and having a bad show are the kind of things to which she can lend a supportive ear to; "that goes back to someone will tell you their whole life story and think nothing of it. Whereas a normal person it would take you months to get to know them and find out that personal information." She is also finding she feels sad when a week ends, leaving that close relationship behind. While this occurrence is the norm sometimes she will just "lone out" for the week, keeping to herself. It gives her time for writing in her journal, writing poetry, or taking time to just "regroup and get your thoughts sorted out." Here she has drawn the distinction between feeling lonely and being alone. There are times when being alone is welcome. Lee has discovered that in the stripping world close connections form to produce a feeling of being an **insider**–being with a group of people with shared experiences and understandings.

Lee is uncertain about her future in the business, but does not know what she wants to do. Sometimes, she finds that she gets sick of dancing and thinks that maybe a nine to five job would be better so that she could get married and raise a family. Then she realizes that she would miss what she is doing "just, if nothing else, the attention that you get from it".

Lee has a strong sense of what freedom and making good money can bring. Even though she has a feeling that she can do anything, she is realizing that because of the travel many other aspects of life can become hectic. For example, medical appointments need to be made when you're back home and in this case can be time consuming. Lee is finding that the **freedom** she gains from her job is balanced by **constraints**. While she feels in control, she also feels that agents can be manipulative. For example, she has an agent friend and sometimes she will take a booking from him. Then her other agents phone and try to make her feel guilty for doing so. They tell her that they've done so much for her, and that her agent friend will cheat her. This makes her feel that they are trying to control her and are not really working for her as they should. In this instance she told them, "I'm doing what I want to do. Like our agents they're working for us. You know what I mean? Like we work for them." Her reaction to their apparent jealousy is, "just phhh I don't pay any attention to them when they get like that". In this case, Lee's sense of control is being infringed upon

by her agents wanting to control her and constrain her freedom to work when and where she pleases.

Lee remembers someone telling her that "if you're not the same person after you've been in the business as you were when you started then you shouldn't be doing it anymore." She relates this to not letting the negative aspects of her job change her. She is feeling ambivalent about stripping at the present time. For instance she loves the attention, but sometimes "I hate when people bug me". She loves her dancing but sometimes "I dread doing my shows cause I'm tired or whatever."

Lee has drawn a distinction between her self in everyday life and her person while on stage: "I look at myself, this is gonna sound strange, but this is just my little thing, I look at myself as two different people. I'm Jackie when I'm on stage and when I'm off stage I'm Lee. I'm back to my person, you know". Jackie is different than Lee: "Jackie is fun and oh yeah kind of stupid and she has fun with people" while Lee is "more– leave me alone I want to be by myself right now, or I want to spend time with my girlfriend, or I want,–more serious". Jackie is to some extent context dependent ; "Jackie on stage–doesn't have a boyfriend for twenty minutes. Jackie wants to dance and that's all she wants to do." In contrast, Lee wants to go home, visit her parents and have a family. In part, this is felt as a way of protecting her self, of protecting Lee; "I don't want them to see the inside of me too." It would be too personal. Further, she observes that Jackie "doesn't want to feel anything or whatever, it's almost a cold person." She elaborates on this point noting that "If I'm pissed off at the world I don't want a guy coming up to me after my show and saying what's wrong. That's a personal question to me, him saying what's wrong. I don't want him to see that I'm upset or something." It keeps her true feelings away from those who would like to intrude, the patrons who have all those questions and want to make a personal connection. There are several ways of behaving which she has found to be effective in protecting herself because as she states: "you have to have some kind of protection for yourself in this business or it will drive you crazy." First is by being blunt or assertive with patrons. For instance if someone criticizes her she may say "hey if you don't like it don't look at it." Interestingly, she has found that she can be like Jackie in other contexts "when I want to protect myself." Thus, there is a distinction for Lee between her **real self**–Lee and her **stage persona** in the

form of Jackie. Her stage persona is a depersonalized self that provides distance between herself and the men in the audience. This protects herself and her personal life from unwanted intrusion.

Lee is aware of the embodied existence of being a stripper and speaks about her awareness of the stage, where to put your drink, how to get on and off the stage, where to put her towel and blanket, how the poles look and feel among other things. She has found that Lee and Jackie have a different sense of body consciousness where "Jackie will go to the bar and wear a low cut shirt Lee will go to the bar and wear a suit where no one can see anything." She also finds that with respect to how they move "Jackie is kind of sleazy... she's more open to touch people... they carry themselves differently." She calls it "stupid mode" where "you're a Bimbo." Thus, as a stripper she is much less self-conscious of her body movement and uses space more freely. She finds that strippers are more open about their bodies, especially when she is with other dancers. She can bend over and no one will pay any attention. Their comfort with nudity is expressed in the following statement: "My girlfriend can go walk around naked in front of my boyfriend and it doesn't bug me." She finds it a striking contrast that all the nudity in a dressing room is not seen as unusual, that it's a part of their everyday experience and loses it's emotional charge. She is aware that this could be potentially very unnerving to the uninitiated.

> When I got my boobs done right all the dancers are like "oh! oh! they're so hard", right? They just touch even–(makes a squeezing motion). I remember a friend of mine that I went to school with, he said, "how do they feel" I said "well feel them". He–"no I'm not going to feel them". I said well just ..." NO!" he said.

This lived bodily experience of being a stripper changes when she is in other contexts; her gestures, mannerisms, body language are different in her everyday life. The distinction between the stripper persona and real self thus is felt at the level of bodily experiences.

Lee has found that people's reactions to finding out what she does for a living run the gamut: friends of her mom have, to her surprise, said things like: "God! If I were younger I'd do it too" and others that, "If I'd had the body or I was younger." People when they find out are "trying to get to know you, to ask you a question." This, however, often puts her in confrontation with the stereotype. She remembers sitting beside a nurse at the airport, who

on finding out she was a stripper, asked her about AIDS: "she said well... 'when you prostitute yourself don't you think about things like that.' I said, 'I don't prostitute myself. I'm a dancer not a hooker'." She recalls that she "almost died when she said that. It was Oh my God! What must you be thinking of me?–It kind of hurt my feelings." Thus, in spite of all the affirmation, assertiveness, and understanding, feelings can be hurt and therefore protecting the self is very important. Patrons in general think the same thing that the nurse thought. She has been propositioned many times and usually just responds with a simple "I'm a dancer not a prostitute." She has come to understand that it's not so much what men think about women, but "what society thinks about us." In her view stripping is about nudity and nudity is not something to be ashamed of, but society has made it that way. Lee believes that one should take pride in their body. The realization of society's attitudes has at times been shocking to her. She remembers dancing in Winnipeg and having to follow a featured performer who could really dance well. The audience asked her why she wasn't the feature because she was prettier. She couldn't believe that they didn't value the excellence of the feature's performance. She felt embarrassed. Lee feels that today's stripping world is lacking in class and if she had the power to change it she would insist that dancers be allowed to keep their g-strings on.

In summary the following themes are seen to be of primary importance in Lee's story of her experience as a stripper:

1. From her childhood the themes of a need for attention, support, and maintaining connection are of primary importance. They are also prevalent in her current understanding of her being, as evidenced by the importance of her parents continuing support. Following from her strong connection with her parents is her need for attention which can be seen as a primary factor motivating her as a stripper.
2. There is a growing sense of suspicion of men in Lees story as evidenced in her relationships with customers and agents. She has learned that to protect herself from the negativity of the customers, she had to develop or differentiate a part of the self which is strong and assertive to allow her to be distant from personal comments.

3. In her personal relationships being understood is central to maintaining a personal relationship. Understanding allows for trust to develop.
4. Being understood by and connected with other strippers creates the feeling of being an insider.
5. At present, Lee is feeling that she has the freedom to do anything that she wants to do. However, she feels that she must constraints which are being imposed on her by agents. This can be seen as her growing sense of independence and need to remain in control of her own life.
6. Lee has had the experience of being stereotyped and this contributes to feeling that she is an outsider. She has felt excluded by others including former friends.
7. For Lee there is a strong distinction between her real self and a stripper persona. She sees the stripper persona as a character or as a different person from her everday self. The stripper persona possesses different characteristics than her self in every day life. This is seen as a strong, assertive, character. She has noticed that the persona is cold in her feelings and serves to distance herself from what she would feel if her everday self were present.

Jill's Story

Jill was 34 years old when I met her for our conversation. She is dressed in casual gym wear and is as relaxed as her attire would lead one to believe. Her voice is clear and confident reflecting her 12 years of experience as a stripper. Jill speaks freely about her occupation and the relationships which influenced her work and personal life.

Jill is the middle child of a family of seven including two older sisters as well as a younger brother and sister. Jill's mother died several years ago; her father still lives alone. Both parents were alcoholics and while their children have experienced varying degrees of success in adulthood they have not maintained good relations with each other.

In high school Jill was very active in drama and art, as well as in staging plays for school productions. She did not have any background in dancing. After completing high school Jill entered a liberal arts college where she continued to develop her artistic talents for two and a half years before becoming a stripper. Jill recalls being very poor at the time, supporting herself with the benefit of government assistance and part-time jobs. The idea of becoming a stripper was seeded in her mind one summer when she was making art t-shirts and her boss suggested to her that she could be an exotic dancer. At the time the suggestion was repulsive. Later while she was back at school she saw an advertisement in the local paper calling for "Exotic Dancers" and she made the decision to answer the ad. Her primary motivation was the fact that she was poor and growing tired of it. Jill's idea was to create a "new person to do it for me"; using her creativity as an artist to do something different. Visiting the school counsellor and gaining his approval secured the confidence that she needed to follow through on her idea.

Jill met with the agent who had placed the ad and who subsequently invited her to audition. This experience was "really scary, I was overweight, I was in school, and I didn't know how to dance and I still really don't (laughs)." She didn't realize that she was supposed to take off all of her clothes, because no one had told her, and despite being booed she performed well enough to get a booking for the following week. Jill recalls being booked with "a lot of really great girls" that first week who liked the fact that they had an art student in their midst. These women gave her support and the benefit of their experiences. Soon after beginning to strip she quit art school. At that time Jill was into the punk scene; dressing the

part, and listening to a kind of music that had not yet become popular. She created a character for her stage show based on her punk look and punk music. She drew upon the dark and horrifying art she was making at the time which was based on her childhood experiences in a "dysfunctional" family. The stage show and character "was a bit of a performance art too– I just wanted to make people realize not everyone's the same, and if it bugged them good." In doing so she found that the character she had created was being harshly received. Thus, she would "get doors slammed in my face, I got fired all the time." Jill remembers little of her actual performances at that time other than becoming enraged on stage–people would tell her that she looked like she was having a fit on stage. She felt a lot of anger towards her family and stripping became a way for her to get "a lot of my anger out." Jill's early experiences were marked by **anger and catharsis**.

A primary influence on Jill, and on the way she approached her occupation, was her relationship with her family. She recalls that "when my younger sister found out that I was stripping she disowned me and then tried to get the rest of my family to disown me–she was horrified." The rest of the family were "appalled."; they felt they knew her and she couldn't possibly be capable of stripping for a living. Feeling rejected she thought "fuck my family, fuck those friends, fuck everybody." She was particularly angry with her parents, seeing their criticisms as hypocritical: "fuck you, you weren't a parent to me when I grew up, you have no right to say what I do with my life right now." Jill, hurt and angered by her family's reaction, withdrew from them and her identity as Jill. She recalls that in creating her first character, or "creature" as she calls it, she buried herself, and made everyone call her by her new stage name. She told people that she was an orphan, thus began a three year period in which she had no contact with family members. On stage, however, the new character allowed her to "get a lot of my anger out." Her friends in art college "were blown away that I started stripping" however, they also thought "I was really boring" and that "me of all people should be doing something exciting." Feeling rejected by her art school friends she found herself moving from one circle of friends to a new circle in the stripping subculture. Of the old group, Jill believes that there was only one which she "would still have hung out with... cause she seemed more open minded." The others responded to her with revulsion and hostility and she found herself feeling rejected by people who had once been her friends.

These experiences reinforced a growing sense of isolation from the outside culture, her family, and friends. In her anger with her family she distanced herself from them while at the same time she was forging new relationships with her newly found family. **Relationship and Isolation** is a bipolar theme expressing the dual nature of her relations.

Jill remembers feeling part of the stripping subculture very quickly: "when I first started dancing it was such a intimate circle–it became family to me and I really did find a mom, a dad, and siblings within that business." She found that her newly adopted family "really took you into their lives, and most people just don't do that so readily or so quickly and I always say dancers make fast friends because you got a time limit and you can tell right away if you're going to like the person or not." Coming from an alcoholic family (and being one herself), allowed Jill to "sense when someone has an issue that's painful for them." She recalls working at a club where she sensed this pain in a young dancer:

> ...and I don't even remember this girl's name now but by the end of the week we had become such good friends, and she was telling me a lot of her childhood trauma and she was a young girl, and for a lot of people that is their first step towards dealing with it, would be telling me because I've been there.

Being there is an apt description for the feeling that Jill developed towards her fellow workers. Another incident highlights the importance of loyalty to this 'family feeling' that Jill has with other strippers. Recently, Jill and her sister were going to go into business with another stripper. Jill found out that her girlfriend was in danger of being "ripped off" by her sister. She told her sister to leave, reasoning that "I don't have the closeness with my family as I do with my girlfriends. Those are really my true sisters in that they have shared life experiences with me." For her being able to bond quickly with other strippers is the result of the following; the limited time in which to get to know another, the stereotyping that they all face, their openness with each other in feeling that they are able to share deeply personal issues, and sharing experiences that few others could understand. She believes that strippers tend to be non-judgmental which is particularly important to Jill since they "are dealing with the same prejudices." There is a feeling of **sisterhood** that Jill recognized as being important to her staying in relationship with other strippers. The feeling that Jill has of being an **insider** (as captured by the theme of sisterhood) is balanced by the feeling that she has of being an

outsider. The reactions of her family and friends from school engendered in her the feeling that she was no longer a part of these groups. In addition, the harsh reactions that her punk character was generating in her audiences made her "feel that I was a freak." These experiences left Jill feeling increasingly distant from people and reinforced the feelings of connection that she felt with her newly found 'sisters'. Her relationship with other strippers is marked by mutuality and feelings of being understood something that was lacking in her relationships in her family of origin.

For Jill there is a contrast between how strippers and those outside of the business form friendships. Forming and maintaining friendships outside of the stripping subculture is something that Jill finds much more difficult to do. A recent experience during the Christmas holidays illustrated the difference for her. At a New Year's Eve party which Jill attended with a date and another couple she knew, Jill realized that people had found out that she was a stripper. People began moving away from her when she would come into their vicinity, "the girls were trying to look up my dress to see if I was wearing panties under my pantyhose." She began to feel both alienated and the need to protect herself. In order to alleviate these feelings she was able to draw upon her **stripper persona** which she defines as a strong, intimidating, assertive person. Jill has found that because people stereotype dancers in the worst possible way, seeing them as "whores, prostitutes, druggies, killers" she is able to use their ignorance against them in order to protect herself. Jill studies people's behavior taking special note of body language, and in particular how people look at each other. She has observed that staring can be a game of domination and submission. The one that looks away first is usually the submissive one. In contexts where she needs to assert herself she finds "I get stared at for a living so you don't want to play that game with me– that scare power is right there." Here Jill was able to draw upon the ability to give people a look that they were unaccustomed to and which they found frightening. Finally, Jill grew tired of playing the game of living up to the stereotype and left the party. This example does not mean that Jill is unable to form friendships with those outside the business, but that doing so requires one to be careful, looking for people who are non-judgmental and sincere. In situations where the real self needs to be protected she is able to get into her intimidating character and use it to keep people at a distance.

As noted previously Jill grew up in an alcoholic family and became an alcoholic and drug user. Her family relationships were not productive in dealing with these problems or in having her concerns heard–she felt that she could not trust her family. In feeling that other strippers were her true family, her true sisters, she immersed herself in a culture in which she was understood and that eventually helped her overcome her problems. In developing a friendship over the course of a week with the young woman mentioned before she found out that she had an abusive father and "she was so hurt and confused, and she said when I got into dancing somehow it's fixing it–and I thought that is so profound, because that's exactly what it's doing, it's fixing it." Jill's family of origin was a situation in which feelings of trust were absent, thus in finding a family where support and understanding were evidenced she was able to develop feelings of trust. **Mistrust and trust** are central features of Jill's understanding of her being in relationship with her family of origin and as a part of the stripping subculture.

After a couple of years of stripping with her punk look Jill began to see that if she was going to progress in her career she would have to develop a persona that had "mass appeal." It was her observation that those who were successful in the business had large 'Vegas style' shows. Jill noted that stripping was a conforming, constraining enterprise even though she had the freedom to create any kind of show she wanted to. She realized that she had to be good to be successful. She began to look at her show and creature as a "product" and a product had to be attractive to be successful; thus she dyed her hair blond and modelled her new product on the work of Christa Vargas. Over the course of time in which she lived her 'creature' or persona in everyday life, she learned the importance of separating the stage persona from real life. For despite the fact that she treasures her memories of being a punk it was difficult emotionally. Having to deal with a constant criticism she found that she "was so sensitive, if anyone said anything wrong or anything I'd burst into tears. So I created this persona that was so hard on the outside to protect a really soft inside." She created a 'scary creature' so that she would be left alone. With her new glamorous character which she could leave on the stage, she was able to be her real self to those whom she loved and learned that she could draw upon the stripper persona and use it in a strategic way whenever she needed to.

Jill , as a stripper, experiences a variety of audience reactions and some of them are difficult and directed personally. She has learned to protect herself by believing "whenever the product is affected I think phhhh it's not Jill it's[name] my creature, I called it." Jill found that she could be herself,

> ...right up until the time I stepped on stage and I'd have to remember Holy Shit! This is what I look like. Big blond hair and you know I created such a thing that I'd forget sometimes what I looked like. I'd think this is the brown haired girl with glasses. I'd say, like, no, I look like this Diva, now I gotta fill up those boots with the personality to go with it.

In becoming her creature Jill describes her disorientation as she makes this transformation. What is revealed in her comment is that this transformation is not fully under her conscious control. There are elements which are activated that produce temporary uncertainty in her identity–she isn't sure who she is.

Jill's experience on stage is defined by a performer's consciousness in which she is aware of everything and everyone as she encompasses the whole room into her awareness. She stresses that she is detached from her own sexuality though she may draw upon aspects of it from her real life. In her awareness of what looks sexy to men she states, "I really draw a line over what I will do on stage– and I always say to guys who say to me 'rub it' or whatever, I go 'I have a sex life and this is not it.'" She also draws a line to protect her everyday life. In this regard she will tell customers made up stories that go along with her stage persona to satisfy their curiosity while keeping her real life to herself. She regards customers inquiries as being intrusive especially when they ask her about her life outside of the stripping context. The stripper persona creates distance from her real self and it is this distance that affords her protection.

She finds herself making eye contact being careful to look away first aware that men interpret this as a submissive gesture allowing them to feel powerful as men. The following statements further elaborate her psychology towards men while on stage:

> Give them the idea that they're the kings in the jungle. It's all a game anyway. So I could make like a guy whose 90 pounds and five foot one, think phhh I can throw

> a fuck at her. Because I give them that I make them feel that way–that I am less than he is. For 20 twenty minutes that's my shtick.

In this way Jill feels powerful on stage–in control. This feeling is embodied: "There you are that, powerful person you know and I have to stand really tall because I have heels on I feel like a fuckin amazon." Her conscious experience includes making little jokes to herself while she dances or humming to the music all the time trying to keep her presence in the room; "you kind of amuse yourself" she states. As a feature she saw her job as keeping the men in the crowd aroused. Making eye contact was seen by Jill as important, however, there was a drawback:

> I want to give every guy a feel like it was for him at one moment or other that my attention was on him that moment. And you can almost sometimes feel guys get angry if you give the same look to someone else.

In Jill's experience men in the audience are looking for personal contact since they are viewed by her as lonely. Thus, they become insulted when someone is being treated as 'special'. Overall and in spite of the men trying to get personal she sees them as "just some strange fuckin guy in the audience." She further notes that in general strippers see only a small cross section of men in society.

Jill has found that she has developed a strong attitude towards the body and it is something that she has come to value:

> And that's why I always say that's what keeps me looking young. Cause I'm surrounded by beautiful women with nice bodies. So, like, you know me, 34 years old, I look really good for 34 years old. Where as I see women that are younger than me and they look hurtin... So I'm always surrounded by that. It keeps me looking better.

Jill believes that being a stripper has changed her view of the importance of physical health and beauty for life. She values physical appearance and believes that it reflects a person who has control over her life. She also states that "I always tell people that strippers are clean. I have to show my pussy for a living and look at it everyday, five times a day." In her view, strippers have much better personal hygiene than most women and it is another aspect that

distinguishes them from other women and makes them more attractive sexually. The **value of appearances** is a prominent theme in Jill's story.

Jill felt that maintaining a **professional attitude** was important as a feature and this included trying "to be there.. whether there's five people there or not." She also found that there was "a charge to having everyone watch your every move" and prided herself on the fact that waitresses would tell her that they sold a lot of beer when she was on stage. In becoming more popular she found that she was "loved, the need to be loved and I'd get a version of that, I got more of that as[name] more love and acceptance than I ever did. So the product was finally accepted."

As noted Jill feels powerful and in control on stage and sees all dancers as being independent minded. Its importance is emphasized by Jill identifying herself with the "typical adult child of alcoholics, not having any control in their life. Soon as they get out of that thinking they want control–and that's the way I am, I have control over my world finally." The issue of **control** infuses many aspects of Jill's life whether one is speaking of her stage persona or her real self.

Becoming a featured performer was felt by Jill as a pressure: "I take it very seriously if you're gettin paid the most you better be better than everybody. So I always felt I had to just kick everybody's ass and it ended up being tiresome." It also contradicted her belief in not being competitive on a personal level. Her ideal in working at a club was to form a team with all the strippers working together to sell the most alcohol that they could. In becoming a feature Jill had to put a lot of positive energy into each show because everyone was watching her, the club owners, agents, other dancers, all with criticism if they felt that she wasn't earning the money that she was making. This again raises the importance of separating the persona from the real self. Jill tells beginning strippers to separate the two because one can get caught up in believing that one's self worth is related to the money one makes. The result can be that one may end feeling less worthy than someone making ten dollars more per show. The flip side of this is that one can end up with a large ego. Recently Jill had to end a friendship because "she was her stage personality off the stage, to me."

Over the years Jill's relationship with her audiences has been quite varied. Initially, she was subjected to abuse and developed a hardened persona to keep them away. With her

feature persona, criticisms were kept away from the true self and occasionally were viewed as useful feedback. A new problem arose with her Vegas style show since now she was very popular and she found that men, seeing her naked and her responding to them positively with eye contact and friendly banter, perceived that they had a real relationship with her. They would approach her with personal questions and thus she was faced with devising new ways of keeping them away from her real self. She developed a "whole bullshit life" to go with her persona perceiving it as part of her product. In addition, Jill has found that maintaining her professional image has required her to project her stage presence off the stage and this became draining. Thus, recently Jill, after a brief hiatus from dancing, created another persona, one who is less concerned with being a feature, incorporating a more relaxed approach to performing. She finds that she is having more fun now than she ever had.

While most of the time Jill is able to play along with other's curiosity about her occupation, there are times when more directly assertive responses are required. She mentions an incident in which she was shopping for her boyfriend and wanted to purchase a gift with her tip money. The clerk said to her "oh where have these been " and then said he was "only joking". She told him to "just fuck off and take the money" venting her frustration at being subjected to crass behavior outside of a bar room. Jill believes that in general she has become a more tolerant person and can be quite lenient, however, there are times when assertiveness is called for. She has also developed the ability to come back with strong responses of her own when people are being personally abusive. In responding sarcastically, she tries to figure out what the persons real problem is and then hit him with it.

With personal relationships she has found that in spite of being tolerant she finds it annoying when people are unable to distinguish between her persona and her real self. She is particularly wary of people who say stupid things to her as if her stage self were a direct reflection of how she is in her everyday life. Similarly with love relationships she does not want someone who is in awe of her persona. Jill has had many relationships which did not succeed, however, she attributes this to her alcoholism rather than her choice of occupation. After becoming sober some six years ago she found that she was able to maintain a long term relationship with a man because he was able to see the real Jill and did not get caught

up in her persona. When the relationship ended it was due to infidelity on his part. As she puts it "I had gone around the block already. I had enough casual sex to last me the rest of my life and I really wanted someone else with that attitude too. –and he obviously hadn't done enough in his life so he ended up having a girlfriend." In Jill's view her occupation creates problems with trust in personal relationships. She feels that this is particularly the case for men who find it difficult to understand that their work involves a certain amount of verbal banter with customers; "he has to know where your head is at." In spite of this, Jill, even though she found someone who understood that stripping is just work, was still betrayed by her partner. She sees people's anger towards strippers as being a reflection of their jealousy of the life that strippers lead–their independence, living their lives for themselves.

Jill sees her future in the stripping business as only lasting two more years. She wants to pay off her debts and put money away to invest in her next projects all of which are connected to stripping. She has already taken time out to help other dancers with large shows and has won important contests. She has begun telling people that she is creating costumes and finds that more and more reflective of how she feels about herself. Her interest and vision is less now as a performer and increasingly as someone who will make use of their experience in the business and blend it more strongly to her artistic abilities. There is an interesting aspect to Jill's experience of a family feeling within the stripping business. She has noticed that by expanding her repertoire into the staging of shows and using her artistic abilities, her stripping friends have found it difficult to relate to her as an artist much in the same way that many years ago her art school friends couldn't relate to her as a stripper. For Jill **personal expressiveness** was seen in her desire to perform and in her interest in developing her show and the characters she created. In addition she found that working with others and helping them with their shows was equally satisfying to her.

The following themes were seen as exemplifying Jill's existence as a stripper:

1. Jill became an independent person at a young age in part as a result of growing up in an abusive home environment. She learned to mistrust authority figures and to rely

on herself and to trust in her ability to make her own judgments. Self-reliance developed out of necessity.

2. Stripping offered Jill a forum to express her creativity and to become financially self sufficient. Personal expressiveness is a strong motivating factor in Jill's experience and she derives great satisfaction from performing and working on her own shows as well as those of others.
3. For Jill developing a sense of control as a stripper was particularly important since her family background was a context in which others were controlling her. Stripping also provided her with a context in which she could express her anger. In this she was with others who were able to understand her feelings.
4. The stripping context was the only place where Jill has felt understood and she developed a feeling of sisterhood with other strippers. This feeling represents the theme of sisterhood in which other strippers are regarded as her true family.
5. Jill has felt stereotyped by others who don't understand strippers (including family members). The theme outsider relates to her feeling like an outcast, an Outsider.
6. The Stripper persona was a character Jill created. It exists as a distinct entity from her everyday self and serves to protect herself by being a strong intimidating presence which keeps others distant. It can be drawn upon in every day circumstances when she needs to protect herself. Along with the persona Jill has developed a professional attitude which keeps her status as a feature performer intact. Her professional image can also be seen as an impression management strategy.
7. Through stripping Jill has placed greater value on physical appearance taking pride in how good she looks.
8. On stage Jill feels in complete control of her show and of the customers. She has developed a number of strategies in dealing with customers all of which serve to protect the self via the stripper persona. She sees people's hostility as jealousy and believes that people who are critical of strippers are being hypocritical and afraid of looking at their own lives critically.
9. The entertainer–stripper identity is well integrated into Jill's self structure. She sees herself in the future as connected to the entertainment industry in some way. At

present this future self is seen as helping others with their shows and working with videotape as a promotional medium.

Alice's Story

Alice is a single, 27 year old mother of two children. Alice has recently retired from dancing after having spent nine years as a stripper. She is an emotionally expressive person unafraid of letting you know what she thinks and feels. I watch her face and eyes as her gestures and expressions inform one as much as her voice.

Alice comes from an alcoholic family "with lots of physical, verbal, and mental abuse." She recalls spending most of her free time as a child looking after her two younger sisters and creating her own free time by skipping school. While "Running the streets" Alice made money selling drugs to bar patrons with one of her parents sending them out to the parking lot to deal with her. She recalls when she was 13 having to drive a drunken boyfriend of her mothers home late at night because her mother was too drunk to do so "I don't have a driver's licence. I've never driven a vehicle in my life and I'm driving some strange drunk man home." It was a relief to leave her childhood behind when she left home at the age of 15. Today her relations with her mother remain strained and it galls her that her mom thinks "that she did a pretty good job of raising us." Her mother's attitudes regarding corporal punishment have resulted in periods when she would break off family ties. She remembers one argument in which she told her mom "well I got my ass beat, when I was a kid with belts, sticks, whatever–and the only thing–it taught me was that it was OK to hit people." She recalls her mother hitting her daughter in the face during a family get together. Alice confronted her mother and told her if she ever did that again she would press charges. They didn't speak to each other for several months. The issues of trust, support, and care are prevalent in her story of her childhood where these elements were lacking. Coping with her family situation results in her withdrawing from her parents and taking responsibility for herself. This represents the roots of her growing independence which eventually resulted in her not trusting authority and moving out of the family home at a young age. **Trust/Mistrust** and **Independence** are two themes reflecting her childhood experiences.

Nine years ago Alice was visiting a childhood girl friend who turned out to be an exotic dancer. After spending several weeks with her, hanging out in the bar where her friend was working as a ramp dancer (a form of table dancing), she suggested to Alice that she should give stripping a try and that it was a "really good way to make money." One day

the club was missing a dancer and her friend approached the club's management in order to secure her debut as a stripper. While waiting for the verdict she was "just wondering if I was going to be successful at it, you know. Was I gonna make money at it? Was I attractive enough to make some money?" She remembers walking up and down the ramp until a man asked her to do a dance for him. Later when she had to perform her first stage show she remembers not being particularly nervous but during the show she was unsure of "what to do next? I'm running out of ideas", since no one had really given her proper instructions on what to do. Alice knew that she was more interested in doing stage shows than in table dancing but when she approached an agent he refused to book her. She resorted to working as a table dancer for a few months, was able to save enough money to purchase some costumes and was promptly booked by another agent.

Alice doesn't see herself as being an exhibitionist and believes that "what really attracted me was the money–I mean I found out that my girlfriend was bringing home, a hundred, two hundred dollars a night, for working you know, six hours." She did not perceive it to be hard work or feel that it was degrading. Alice notes that she had been working hard for a living at that time and with her lack of education, finding a job that would pay much more than her current six dollars an hour would be unlikely. Another factor was her frustration that even though she wasn't making much money and had to work hard she "had to put up with a lot of crap." She recalls working at a tanning salon and being approached by a drunk and lustful owner pushing him off and asking him what he thought he was doing. She recalls harassment as a common problem and didn't like having to put up with a "moody manager" feeling that "if you're not the boss you have to put up with a lot of crap." These incidents reveal the importance of **Independence and control** as factors motivating Alice in her decision to become a stripper. Her experiences with harassment furthered her belief in the importance of not having to rely on people in the position of authority who in her experience could not be trusted. Becoming a stripper provided her with greater control over her employment.

Alice hid the fact that she was dancing from her family for the first eight months, fearing that her mother would be upset. Her cover was blown by people from her home town and she was immediately confronted by her sister. Knowing that her sister would inform on

her, she immediately called her, fearing a critical response which never materialized. Instead her mother felt hurt that she didn't trust the relationship enough to let her know. Her mom was concerned to know that she wasn't being forced into stripping, warned her not to become involved in the drug scene, and to be careful with her money. While she wasn't supportive of the choice, neither was she opposed–finally letting her know that what she did with her life was her business as long as it wasn't hurting her or anyone else.

Before she had children Alice describes a typical day as being lax. She found that she had plenty of time to get prepared for shows and would do her shopping, appointments, and social visiting between shows. Life was lived in bits and pieces between shows–a life adjusted to the temporal constraints of an entertainer's life. After having children there came a dramatic shift in the structure of Alice's life. What had been lax before now became hectic. Getting up early, getting the children fed, taking them to the baby sitter–all had to be completed before she would rush off to the club to perform her first show of the day. She had less time for entertaining and visiting now, filling her time with business concerns, shopping and trying to fit in a visit with her children. Finding a baby sitter who could spend 12 or 13 hours a day with her child was not easy and few liked to have a parent disrupt their schedule with their visits. While working out of town Alice tried getting herself booked with close friends who wouldn't mind travelling with a small child. Otherwise, she was relying on family members to help with the care of her daughter. She remembers having "a little more responsibility, I had to you know, buy a house so the kids weren't moving from this apartment to that apartment, and I had more bills to pay, more responsibility." Balancing the roles of mother and stripper was difficult and required the assistance of both friends and family. There is a balance between the **freedom** that stripping afforded her with the **constraints** of the occupation. This balance shifted dramatically when she had children. Before she could afford to pursue her own interests and lifestyle there was a sense of being able to work easily within those constraints. However, when children became her priority, time and travel constraints moved into the foreground.

Alice draws a strong distinction between herself in everyday life, her **"real" self,** and her **stage persona**:

> When I was on stage I was no longer Alice. I was somebody else completely. I became this stripper person [name]or [name] or whoever you want to call it. I was this person who enjoyed dancing around... joking around with these complete strangers.

The joking aspect had the effect of allowing her to distance herself from her sexuality. She states that,

> It took the pressure off of having to be this sexy sensual human being, who I think really I'm not. Like in everyday life I'm not conscious of how sexy I look in front of other people or how I'm walking.

She stated that in "real life I slouch and I can really care less about what people think of me. But on stage it's a different story". In her everyday life she does not "walk around men grinding my hips and (laughs) sticking my tongue out at them." The difference between the two is in their respective embodied existences. For Alice her stage consciousness involves having to stand tall, smiling, concerned about as she wonders "how my hair looks, how does my make-up look?" On stage Alice found herself in a state of heightened awareness, sensitive to the audience's reactions, whereas in real life she does not see herself as being an observant person. As Alice climbs on stage she's feeling tall in those five inch high heels "aware of the moves I'm doing–after a while I'm not aware that I'm doing it." She is able to "jump around, spin around, do whatever I want in five inch heels. Off stage I can't even walk in five inch heels (laughs) It's really strange." There are times when Alice feels a surrealistic quality to being on stage in the form of a self reflective consciousness where she's thinking "why the hell am I hanging upside down from a pole? (laughs) Why am I doing this? This is retarded. I can't believe I'm doing this." Other times she had feelings of strength and power feeling that "I'm really strong, like wow I can do this. I'm hanging upside down on a pole by one leg. I'm really physically fit."

Being on stage the element of **Control** was most important both in terms of the image she was trying to portray and of her relationship to the audience. Describing this process she observes:

> When I first walk out some guy's not even looking at the stage, he's yakking to his buddy. Drinking his beer. Not really paying attention, and I go over to his side of the

> stage, and look him directly in the eye and start doing whatever I'm doing, dancing and trying to be a bit seductive, and all of a sudden he's not even hearing his buddy anymore.

In contrast, when she attends a night club with girlfriends she frequently does not even notice if someone "is checking me out." Joking around is a strategic act in which she purposefully appeals to the customers humorous side "rather than their horny side (laughs)." Not viewing herself as a sexy woman in everyday life she found it a struggle to portray herself as such on stage: "I really had to think about it you know. What is sexy? What is sensual? What isn't? What am I doing that's not?" Her discomfort was expressed in her use of space preferring to "hang around the edge of the stage and just joke around with people, try and be silly and that came more naturally for me than trying to be sexy." This is also related to her stated dislike for being the center of attention commenting that "I'd rather be up front with the crowd" feeling that being in the center she would have to carry the show by herself whereas at the edge "being close to the crowd it was kind of like we were all together in the show." This view of herself is consonant with her ethical stance in not having cosmetic surgery " to make myself more sensual," feeling that one should be able to attract people with "what you already had to work with."

Alice focused on her sense of humor and love of music to get into the performance feeling that "the music I played on stage, I was really into it and the crowd felt I was really into it." The kind of preparation required to perform was, for Alice, related to the context. For her there was a considerable difference between performing in a small town and working a club in the big city. In a rural club "it was just get ready, go up there, do your thing, and leave," whereas in the city one is always conscious of being observed; "the club owners and managers are always keeping an eye on you, the agents are coming to check you out." One needed to put on their best shows and this meant "working myself up to keep that smile on my face, for the 18 minutes I was up there". Alice sees keeping a smile on one's face as a key factor in performing:

> I think that is 50% of your show. There are days, however, when you just don't feel like smiling. You've had a lousy day or you have other things on your mind or really

just don't want to be there, and you gotta go up there and pretend that you're happy and having a great time, and loving your job.

Bad shows were "the longest 18 minutes of your life. When the crowd is not into it sometimes it can be really, really hard on your ego." In her view those were times when her overall self-esteem was at a low ebb, while at other times though she was feeling better about herself she was unmotivated and "I'd go like OK screw you guys. I don't really care what you think anyway I'm still getting paid." When her life was at a low point though, the audiences responses could affect her personally. Alice recalls working one particular bar that didn't really have a regular clientele:

> It was always strangers when you worked there and it wasn't a real lively crowd. It was a lousy stage. Lousy lights. Lousy crowds. I remember a couple of times not being into my show and not smiling and the guys would respond to this–and they would say rude things and telling you to smile, smile, smile. Or pick out certain imperfections in your body and say them out loud to you in front of everybody.

Feeling the stress she remembers she would "start breaking out in cold sores, and rashes, cause I'd just be so stressed out." Feeling awful she would go back to her room and lie down, watch TV, or commiserate with her co-workers. Alice states that much of the time this was her fault–coming on stage with a bad attitude would guarantee that one would leave in much the same state. It would happen to her when she had been working long stretches without a break when she was "more interested in making money than looking after myself." In contrast, there were times when "it was easy. Other times I was loving my job. I didn't have outside things going on in my life that were affecting my job and I'd go up there and have a great show, there was no working up to it." These would typically be times when she was feeling good about herself. She comments that, "I would just have a great time on stage the time would fly by, I would make incredible tips."

In sum, Alice draws a strong distinction between her stage persona and her real self. The persona has a different embodied experience than does her real self, she feels as if she was a different person, with a different posture and awareness of herself and others. The quality of Alice's performances depended on the context of employment with the pressure to perform being strongly felt in city clubs. For Alice, how she was feeling about her job

was related to how she was feeling about herself outside of the stripping context. She realizes that this occurred during times when she was neglecting to take care of her self and with her self esteem at a low ebb she was less able to protect herself. In these ways Alice's sense of **control** is balanced by her feelings of **vulnerability**.

Alice believes that strippers should possess a healthy amount of suspicion because "it seems like everybody's trying to scam you for something." An example of this is when owners are trying to cut show prices, or trying to add deductions to ones check, or invoke fines, or charge extra for "housekeeping". Even insiders are out to get a piece of the action for instance some DJ's are notorious for trying to get extra tip money. Alice recalls a time when a man gave her a thousand dollars and the DJ insisted on getting a 20% tip (she did not give it to him).

Alice's experiences with agents, who are supposed to be working on her behalf, have been varied. Some have shown genuine care for strippers "whether they are being treated fairly, what their work environment is like" while in contrast others "just look at it as a way of making money off these girls and really couldn't care less what happens to the girls". She believes that unfortunately the ones that do not seem to care as much are the ones that are the most successful. One example she relates is the case of an agency that has a monopoly in a city and she has heard him "on the phone with other dancers, just insulting them. I mean calling them fat ass bitches, pigs, blah, blah, blah, not worth the money that you're making". Thus, agents have not inspired a high level of trust in Alice viewing them as "go betweens" who are manipulative of dancers freedom. Agents get strippers to go where they want them to go "for whatever price that is–and that price would not necessarily be a fair price to you. It would be whatever price makes the agency look good". Agents may tell a stripper that there is no booking available anywhere else except the one place that they want them to go and one would have to work there for considerably less than their show price "which nine times out of ten is bullshit". Alice deals with this situation in the following manner "Myself, (laughs)... I'll flat out call them liars to their face" which, more often than not resulted in her getting her way. Other times one may "get blackballed from an agency or a club" which did not bother her very much because she would just book with another agency. These instances demonstrate not only her strong sense of self-reliance, but her need to be in control as well.

They are related in these instances to her suspicion of their motives and taking care of her interests. While co-workers can be supportive of problems with agencies most will draw the line at moral support, especially if the confrontation involves a club owner. Alice remembers a time when she was suing a club for firing her without just cause violating the stipulations in her contract. Her agent was trying to talk her out of it fearing they would lose the booking. She went to court and won her case not caring whether she worked there again or not. A year later the club closed. These relationships are marked by Alice's strong feelings of **mistrust** and the need to take care of her own self interests.

The distinction between **insiders** and **outsiders** is exemplified by the way in which Alice forms friendships. Alice states "I could be more open with my friends who are in the business than I ever could be with my friends outside of the business." This was highlighted by life on the road where one can feel lonely and therefore it was "nice to have other dancers to share your frustrations with because they've been through it themselves." Strippers share a common bond by virtue of the relatively unique nature of their work and the difficulty others have in understanding them. This feeling of shared experience clears the way for being able to "be myself in front of other dancers". The bonding process with other strippers occurs more quickly than it would in their everyday life with outsiders. For one thing "you have a lot of time on your hands." After the initial meeting one will often find themselves already sharing stories and hanging out with their co-workers. There is also a feeling of vulnerability, a sense that one trusts the other with their thoughts and feelings which Alice speculates may be "because we've all seen each other naked... you know there's nothing left to hide." In contrast friends outside the business are viewed as more conservative resulting in more care being taken with disclosure; "So I'd just kind of tone myself down a little bit." In the stripping business closeness is engendered since "everyone in the stripping business has something in common" while outside "you don't know how much you want to tell the other person" disclosure is more careful and trust becomes an issue. Elaborating upon this point she states, "it takes a long time to find out what you have in common." Within the space of a week or a few days it is common for strippers to develop friendships that would take months in the outside world. These statements emphasize the importance of **being understood and trust** to the connection that Alice has with her co-workers.

With respect to love relations Alice found that they "didn't work (laughs). It was really hard for it to work because 50% of the time you're on the road." At home, Alice found that the stresses of the job would filter down into the relationship. She sees herself as someone who can be consumed by her work and become "less understanding to the needs of my partner." Alice was not willing to compromise the time she afforded to her daughter for the sake of a relationship with a man. In addition, she does not see herself as one to rely on others "to find out who I am or make up who I am" or to "giving up a part of myself for another person– It's like– take care of yourself!" At other times she found potential partners would become "jealous of the business", of the time and investment of personal energy into exotic dancing. Even for those who indicated to Alice that they had some understanding of her "they understood me– that no matter how much bitching they do it's not going to change the situation anyways so the might as well accept it (laughs)." While some of her partners would blame stripping for their relationship problems Alice found that it was typically from "within" rather than stripping itself. Alice presents herself as one who has tried to work for her children's best interests, to work hard, and to be in charge of her own life. This is consistent with the feelings that she relates with respect to intimate relations. Her partners found it difficult to relate to someone who had a need to be independent and who held her children as her first priority.

Dealing with the stereotypes is a common experience for strippers. Alice found that some "had this idea of what they thought strippers would be like–they've gotta be some skanky ex-prostitute." She finds that people upon meeting her would be shocked that she did not live up to their preconceived notions, shocked that she was "normal" and "shattering everything they believed a stripper would be." Others would be more vocal in their criticism suggesting that she was degrading herself. Such people, Alice has found to be judgmental and narrow minded people who she speculates "were really insecure people". She also sees considerable hypocrisy in such people who she feels should examine their own life before judging hers. Dealing with the stereotype emphasizes the theme of **outsider**–feeling that one is being distanced from others.

While Alice hasn't been afraid to tell people what she does for a living, often relishing the shock she could engender in others, she would usually bring it up only when

asked. The exceptions to this are notable. Applying for jobs she would put entertainer on the application forms and would only reveal her stripping past if asked. Telling women she found more difficult and she would wait until they knew her "a little bit and liked me." This reticence was also demonstrated with her relatives that she visited overseas. At a large family gathering she informed them that she worked in a gym. A year later when her some of her relatives made a visit they found out about her stripping through her sister. Alice felt guilty that she hadn't told them the truth "then I looked like a stripper and a liar (laughs)". Trust/mistrust are themes expressed through her fear of exposure and awareness that outsiders often do not understand that the stereotype does not represent her lived reality. Thus, she approaches others with caution, protecting herself.

The following themes were seen to be prominent in Alice's story of her existence as a stripper:

1. Alice who grew up in an abusive home developed a sense of independence at an early age as she took care of herself and her sisters. She also learned to mistrust authority figures while learning the importance of being able to rely on herself.
2. Issues of control are prominent in her relationships with audiences, agents, and management. She strongly resists the attempts of others to control her life because it mirrors her childhood relationships where authority figures could not be trusted.
3. Alice sees herself as independent emphasizing the importance of self-reliance in her life. Her independence is not well understood by the men in her life. Her priority is to care for her children. She does not want to be reliant on others.
4. Control is a prominent theme in her relationships with agents and customers. Alice developed into an assertive person who would not let others get away with harrassing her or imposing their control on her. Her sense of control on stage was balanced by feelings of vulnerability. Feeling vulnerable on stage was often a function of how she was feeling in her everyday life.
5. Alice felt more closely connected with her fellow strippers than with others. Feelings of being understood was a central aspect of these relationships.

6. Alice draws a distinction between her self in everyday life and her self on stage which she views as another person. The persona on stage feels differently in bodily experience as well as in behavior from her experience in everyday life. She strongly differentiates the sensual side of the stripper from her self in real life. She sees her experience on stage as playing the role of a sexy woman unlike how she feels in everyday life. While she plays down her sensuality in real life she struggles to maintain it on stage.

7. Alice is cautious in developing relationships with people outside the stripping business. She protects herself from the stereotype by letting people get to know her a bit before she reveals what she does for a living to them. This was demonstrated when she was applying for different jobs.

CHAPTER SEVEN
DISCUSSION

In this chapter I present a synthesis of the life world of the night club stripper. The synthesis involves a process of intuitive, integrative, reflection drawing together themes found in the individual descriptions. They can be viewed from the perspective of Bruner's (1990) theory as distributed themes, in that these aspects of the self are shared by the women in this study. Consistent with the views of self from a post-positivist perspective as well as the psychosocial views of development discussed earlier, these themes and constructs may retain their own individuality vis-a-vis the individual while at the same time reflecting what philosopher Zwicky (1992) calls resonant form. In addition differences between the women within themes will be examined with particular respect paid to the patterning and emphasis of themes that may account for differences. The descriptions of these processes will include an examination of their relationship to previous findings reported in the literature on the night club stripper, as well as the theoretical literature pertaining to self, identity formation, and women's development. These findings are organized around Gilligan's (1982) idea of voice; of self in relationship, the body, and self.

The discussion contained in this section has a non-linear structure. The presentation order will be recursive, moving between the theoretical work, themes, and voices. This structure is consistent with the main thesis that the self-structure changes or shifts in the emphasis of its various elements across time and context. This does not obviate the possibility that certain elements may be more important than others although, in my view, the findings suggest that these elements shift in their emphasis across context. I have found Gilligan's (1982) idea of voice to be most useful in organizing the findings. Thus, the reader will find certain themes recurring throughout the discussion. For example "integration" and "differentiation" appears several times. In the first part of the discussion the focus is on the self-in-relation. The second part has its focus on bodily experience, while the third emphasizes the everyday self/stripper persona distinction. The fourth moves back to the self-in-relation focusing on the context of customer-stripper relations. The next section moves back into themes emphasizing the voice of the self and identity formation. The final section

offers a tentative model of the self structure examining the relationship between the everyday self and stripper persona across context and time.

Figure one presents a schematic of how I organized the discussion. The idea of recursive structures as used in this schematic was influenced by the works of: Hofstadter (1979) (and in particular the work Godel, Escher, Bach: an eternal golden braid.), Winterson (1995) (Art & Lies), Zwicky (Lyric Philosophy), Gergen (1990) (Lifestories: Pieces of a dream), Atwood (1993) (The Robber Bride), and Young (1987) (Taleworlds and Story Realms).

A. The Relational Voice

Entry Into The Occupation

The findings of this study indicate that the reasons given for entering the stripping occupation were; the idea of a glamorous life, freedom, independence, the excitement and adventure of travelling, and the primary factor, money. At the time of entry many of the women were in financial need and/or were feeling frustrated with their current life prospects. " I'd been with the band doing lights. I was supposed to get on stage and sing with them–making fifty dollars a week." " I had moved out to Hollywood in hopes of becoming an actress or a singer or a writer or a dancer or anything that pertained to the arts. So I got a job as an auditor.. And so I kept seeing these little adds in the paper, 'five hundred dollars a week'. It sure sounded better than my hundred and twenty five." "I was putting myself through school along with government assistance and I as really poor." "I really believe it was the money because being uneducated and trying to get a job, you know I was working for six dollars an hour–but I really had to work hard for that money and put up with a lot of crap."

Mary and Lee were not in financial difficulty nor was there a "felt strain" that predisposed them to become strippers. They were influenced by their social group: "For the past year, my grade twelve year, I wanted to be a dancer" and "when I got into high school a girlfriend was dancing–my best friend–was friends with a dancer and we started hanging out together." This last statement reflects a commonality in the experiences of several of the women who entered the occupation based on the recommendation of a friend who was

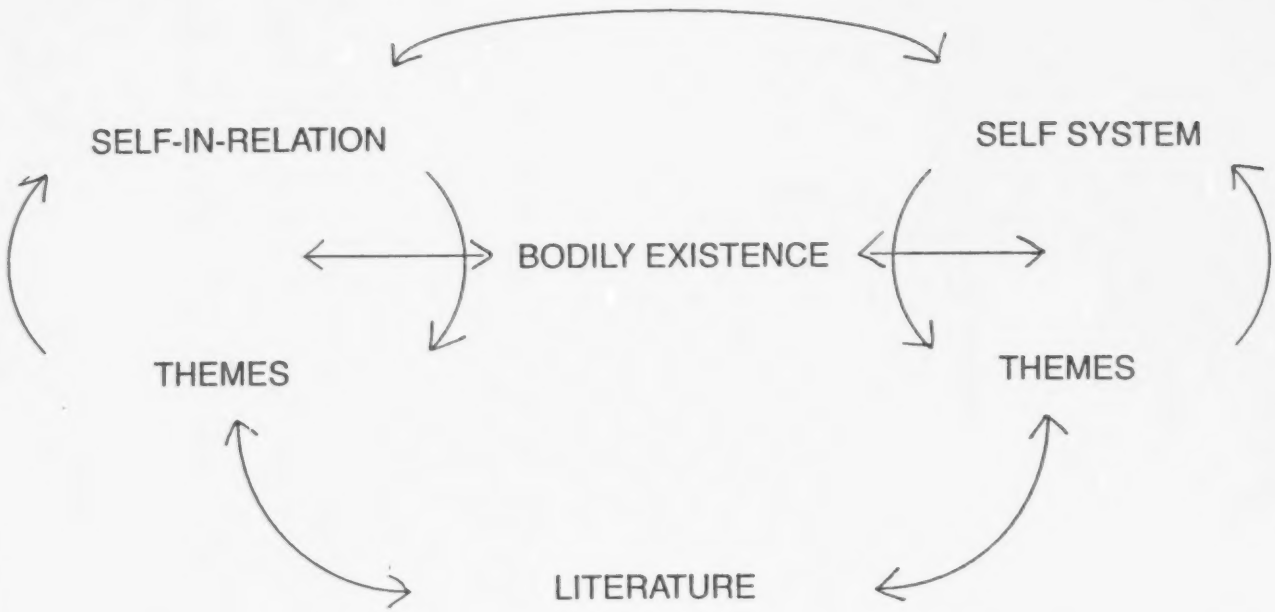

Figure 1. The discussion is structured around the embedding of themes across the voices of the self-in-relation, bodily existence, and the self. The relationships between these factors as well as the literature are seen as recursive mirroring the structure of the self system across contexts.

dancing at the time and who was directly involved in their occupational entry: "My girlfriend was dancing that week that I was home–and one day when I was visiting with her she said 'you have an audition in fifteen minutes.'" For these women friends opened the way for them to begin stripping and provided them with the opportunity to experience the subculture before becoming an active member. In this way they were not completely naive coming into the occupation and experienced greater comfort with the occupational setting than did their counterparts. In Jennifer's case her friend had set up the audition and even went so far as to go up on stage with her. Mary's experience contrasts with those of her colleagues. For her it was a gradualentry over time; moving from wet t-shirt contests to auditioning as a dancer with her friends supporting her. Both Angela and Jill answered ads in local newspapers. Angela was alone in her decision, but Jill had spoken to a school counsellor. These findings are in accord with other studies which established that finances were the primary factor in occupational entry and that friends or people in the business served as the agents of recruitment (Boles,1973; Skipper & McCaghy, 1970a). While the literature focuses on the issue of "felt strain" in the form of finances or relational difficulties as the primary motivating factors, the results of this inquiry suggest the importance of a long process of consideration culminating in a readiness or predisposition to become strippers. Several of the women in this study had been considering the prospect of becoming a stripper over the course of a year, a process involving both friends and family members.

These women's initial experiences as strippers were characterized by nervousness, fear, and uncertainty: "the first time I did it was really scary–I didn't know how to dance", "all I really remember of that show is what do I do next?", "I thought I was going to throw up", "It was the scariest thing I'd ever done, I drank and drank and drank." There were numerous concerns that these women had including self-doubts about their attractiveness, how they looked, what their parents would think, and worries about not knowing what to do. In fact, all but one of the women in this study was uncomfortable about the process during her first show. In general, these women were given few instructions before their first attempt.

None of the women in this study had a background or training in dance. Some, however, did have a background in the arts. For those who had a background in the arts,

dancing was seen as an opportunity to make money and express their creativity. Typical staments were, "that became my art", "I could be somewhat creative and still pay the bills". The others, who had no such backgrounds, mention their interest in and attraction to performing. The absence of mentors were also prominent in these women's stories with the exception of Angela who had the support of members of the entertainment community. Female entrepreneurs were found to have a similar problem (Young & Richards,1992) .

Integration/Differentiation: Family Considerations

The literature suggests that the agents of recruitment include such people as friends and members of the entertainment community, but is curiously silent on the issue of the importance of family members both in terms of occupational entry and in maintaining their careers (Boles, 1973; Skipper & McCaghy, 1970a). The majority of the women did not immediately tell their parents what they were doing: "actually I lied to them about what I was doing", "I told them I'd got a job in a bar." These acts were motivated by concerns for their relationships: "I feared that my mother would be really upset with me," "it was so hard because if they weren't going to accept it they weren't going to accept me doing it the–tension was gonna be there all the time." There was also some concern for protecting their families as well as themselves from the criticism and feelings of potential stigmatization. Other strippers I have spoken to would refuse to have their pictures in the paper for a club's advertising in their home towns. Several of the women felt the need to hide their true occupations from relatives. These findings were in accord with the sentiments expressed by the women Keefe (1993) interviewed, several of which hid their identities, knowing that they would not be understood if their parents found out what they did for a living.

For the women in this study family members were, at least initially, upset by their choice of occupation.Typical parental concerns included: "you'll start prostituting," "then there was the drugs," and "she just wanted to make sure that I wasn't being forced into it." Parents of several of these women had difficulty accepting and understanding their daughter's choice. This caused alienation from the family or created a source of on-going conflict. Others, however, were able to maintain supportive family relationships. Eventually,

for most of these women, a successful amelioration was achieved through convincing their parents that stripping was not in accord with stereotypical perceptions. What seemed to differentiate the parents that reaffirmed their connection with their daughters from those that were not able to do so was a willingness on their part to set aside their preference for their children not to become strippers.They were able to maintain open communication with their daughters and provide them with emotional support and financial advice. These women eventually received direct parental involvement in their occupations in the form of help with their shows and contests.

These outcomes mirror the nature of their relationships in their family of origin when these women were children. Jennifer, Alice, and Jill came from families in which they were abused and relationships were troubling and distant. For them ongoing support was limited, sporadic, or absent. The themes of exclusion/inclusion were prominent in these women's statements about relationships with family members. For example, in Jennifer's case her mother's initial concerns were expressed through her anger and stripping was to remain a source of conflict resulting in Jennifer feeling alienated. A rapprochement with her mother was the result of being able, after some time had passed, to have a "heart to heart conversation" about the business and explaining to her mother that stereotypical views of strippers were largely unfounded. Her mother became more relaxed about her stripping because "now she understood." She notes that in other areas of her life her mother was very supportive. Jill's family responded by rejecting her as the following statements attests: "my younger sister once she found out that I was stripping disowned me and then tried to get the rest of my family to disown me". This resulted in her distancing herself from them for three years. It was only when her mother was dying that she was able to come to terms with her regarding her childhood. While Alice's mother was quite understanding of her dancing their relationship is still a tenuous one. For these women feelings of support, being understood, and inclusion were sporadic. Feelings of exclusion characterize their relationships. While the interviews in this study did not focus on the issue of family relations the data suggest that these families tended to lack the characteristic of integration that Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993) discussed. Differentiation did occur in the form of independence, however, it was not achieved through a climate of support and active involvement. For these women the

achievement of their independence was more in terms of the necessity of protecting and taking care of themselves.

In contrast, Mary, Lee, and Angela had what could be characterized as families that were supportive during their childhoods and all three, after the initial shock, received varying degrees of support from family members. Unlike the stories of family life told by Jill, Jennifer, and Alice, both Lee and Mary have been able to maintain stable and loving relations with their parents. They have been supportive since the initial shock of their daughter's involvement in stripping wore off. Feelings of closeness exemplify their relationships with their parents. These parents were able to continue to support their children even though they did not agree with their choices. Setting their feelings aside, they included their children in the family and their children felt their desire to maintain connection. For Lee and Mary this meant allowing them to stay in the family home. Josselson (1992) notes the importance of "holding" in allowing people to grow while exercising their autonomy and skills. Their parents held their children closer while offering them security and allowing them to pursue their occupation. Angela also had parents who did not pose any difficulties and they continue to maintain a close relationship. These women's families contained the features of both integration and differentiation (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993). These characteristics included support, involvement, and the freedom to explore their interests.

The importance of this support cannot be underestimated since Mary, Lee, and Angela have experienced relatively greater financial success than the other three women. Jennifer's statement summarizes the importance of this factor: "my own mother was so absent you know. Couldn't deal with it, couldn't be there. And I think that if she could have been I would have been more successful."

The findings in this inquiry have interesting parallels with research on female entrepreneurs (Young & Richards, 1992). It was found that for women, becoming an entrepreneur involved a perceived lack of opportunity and resources while it also provided an escape from "stereotypical and subservient" occupations. The women in the current study made similar points, mentioning a lack of money, frustration with their current prospects, lack of opportunity, and the importance of freedom and autonomy in their choosing stripping as an occupation. Like the women in this study, entrepreneurial women had initial fears

about informing their families–feeling that they would view their work as an unacceptable, marginal occupation. Similarly both strippers and entrepreneurs had concerns over the difficulty in maintaining relationships and the importance of support in the success of their business ventures.

The issue of family life and structure, as presented here, is limited to the minimal data available from the interviews and should not be viewed as anything more than suggestive. What they do suggest is that for these women their family relations were important to their development as strippers. It is an area that has been, with the exception of Keefe's (1993) interviews, largely ignored by the literature. The relationship between the dynamics in the family of origin and their relationship to occupational entry and maintenance are areas that are in need of further exploration.

Insider/Outsider

For the women in this study the feeling of being insider/outsider are primary themes related to other facets of their existence such as inclusion/exclusion and relationship/ isolation. The sense of being an insider is found in their sense of sisterhood and of a mutual and often unspoken understanding that they have of each other in the stripping context. Being an insider is balanced by, and to some extent reinforced by, feelings of being an outsider. Feeling like an outsider is related to their sensitivity to being treated like the stereotype, the feeling of being different from others, including the feeling that they are outside of the mainstream culture.

Relationship /Isolation

A number of the women in this study mentioned that the way they form relationships with other strippers is a primary distinction that separates them from others. The following comments speak to this point: "dancers make fast friends because you got a time limit and you can tell right away if you're going to like them or not" and "so you form really quick attachments because you're alone." A key to this are the feelings of trust which develop quickly as these women speak about intuitively "knowing" quickly whether or not they will be able to relate to a person and "the barriers that would normally take a long time to get

broken down are broken down faster. They're dealing with the same prejudices that–you are, they're not going to judge you." Another factor mentioned by several of the women is that "I really believe that part of it is because we've all seen each other naked, you know there's nothing left to hide." The ease and comfort that they demonstrate to each other with their bodies is reflected in the relationship.

It is common for relationship formation to begin with small talk about the business: "sit around with the girls and gossip for a while–cut down some agents– cut down some club owners" and "I mean we can talk about the frustration you feel being smart, stuck in a position where everybody wants you to feel dumb." As they become more comfortable with each other they move on to personal issues as one of the women exclaims, "dancers are very open people they'll tell you their whole life story," while another remarks "by the end of the week we had become such good friends that she was telling me a lot of her childhood trauma." More typical though is the need for someone "to share your frustrations with because you know they've been through it themselves" and "we all had the same gripes, we all had something we can complain about, about the clubs, the stage we're working on, the people we're working with, the agents–how one club was better than the other." Feelings of being understood are a critical aspect to the formation of these relationships, and for some are an important part of their existence as a stripper. Openness develops quickly when one knows that they will be accepted: "There's nothing but support. Nobody would dare say to you 'Oh stop being so sensitive'. "

Several of the women spoke about offering support to someone who needed help. For example, when I spoke with Angela she had taken a young stripper under her wing to travel with, assisting her in escaping from an abusive relationship. In part knowing that support is available is related to the feeling that the other is "there for you" and is revealed in the following comment which illustrates its importance in the development of a "best friendship":

> We met as dancers on the road, blah, blah, blah, saw each other a couple of times, but we were close enough that she was in [city]and was having a hard time, and was really stressed out and I went phhh if you need me I'm here you know. We're friends and if you need me I'm here and well I guess she needed me. I didn't really

even know that, at the time, but we spent time together during that week and then a week following that and then she was gone and every time she came back we'd see one another and she'd stay with me and we're fast and true friends.

Being there for someone is central to the development of trust and the feelings of attachment that these women felt towards their coworkers. While not all relationships are as strong as the best friendship just described there is an expectation (part of the thereness) that one can turn to another for support. This feeling of being there for another involves being able to take one for granted and is particularly important when one is experiencing life changes or difficulties (Josselson, 1992). These relationships demonstrate the mutual empathy that Surrey (1991) emphasizes in a discussion of women's development. This refers to the feelings of being understood and validation that these women experience with each other and which Kohut (1977) notes as being important in reducing tension and anxiety.

For these women their relationships with each other involved an embeddedness which as Josselson (1992) states "exists within a cultural set of meanings that form a web of interdependence as well as a lexicon for interpretation of experience" (p.179). The following comment encapsulates this feeling: "they are really my true sisters". Sisterhood is a theme that captures this feeling of being an insider in the context of relationships with other strippers.

What is evident about the stories these women tell to one another is that they serve the function of reinforcing certain stripper identity elements. Thus they tell stories of overcoming travel problems, getting the best of problem agents, dealing with difficult club management, poor treatment from hotel staff, stage stories that focus on obnoxious or strange customers, funny stories about strange people, or the absurdity of their jobs. These stories focus on their independence, issues of trust, their cleverness, street smarts, and self-reliance. They offer to the other a view of the self as someone who is like them–someone who understands.

There are times though when someone violates their sense of trust and strippers will end a friendship quickly and directly as this statements suggests: "if a person comes into my world and we have a problem that can't be remedied, then I let them go out of my life and I'll always love them but they just can't be in direct contact with my world cause they're

destructive." It would seem that violating this sense of trust by betrayal of the relationship is a most serious violation of the stripper's sub-cultural norms. This is probably because they are in a context that is frowned upon by mainstream culture and their support systems are limited and therefore trust is highly valued. Similarly most of the women in this study spoke about their dislike of the competitiveness in the business that can occur if someone's ego becomes inflated or one becomes overly critical of another's role as a feature or their show. The women who were uncomfortable with competitiveness spoke to its negative impact on relationship, work environment, and its opposition to being able to work together for the benefit of the club. One woman mentioned that in such cases she would choose to "lone out for the week" in her room.

The closeness these women felt for each other was exemplified in the way in which they spoke about relationships with people whom they have not seen for years. It was always there to be remembered and while specifics of the relationship may be beyond recall, the feeling of connection is still there as indicated by the following statements: "I barely remember our experiences together, hanging out in dressing rooms and stuff–I remember what she was like as a person–six years ago–anyway she's a true friend" "I've had incidences I've cherished and I'll never see that person again–there's a lot of those loose end ones." These women spoke about seeing other strippers (who they only knew through their work) very sporadically over the course of their careers and yet they regarded them as friends and they would quickly reform their friendship after several years absence. Josselson (1992), writing about the "picking up" again of relationships after long absences, states, "what is picked up is the old music, which both people remember although neither could have remembered it alone" (p. 27). While the specifics of their relating have faded in memory it is the pattern of relating that remains. It is enhanced in the case of these women by their shared ways of being–in this I suggest there is an emotional resonance that is mutually activated in each others presence. This is one way in which Bruner's idea of a "distributed" self may be operating.

Being an Outsider: Isolation/Exclusion

In contrast to their relationships with other strippers are the relationships these women had with people outside of the stripping business. Many of the women explain that forming these relations is a cautious prospect primarily due to their being stereotyped: "because they had this idea of what they thought strippers would be like, you know they've gotta be some skanky ex-prostitute." Most of the women in this study have developed a sensitivity to being judged as the result of being stereotyped. These women speak clearly and painfully about their experiences in dealing with the stereotype and about feeling excluded and alienated: "People always have that 'she's a stripper or an ex-stripper' on their brain. I went to a new year's eve party–I went from people–just that I was an attractive girl to– I was a freak. –I was really alienated." Lee recalled an incident speaking with a nurse in the airport who asked if she was worried about AIDS given that she is a prostitute. Lee states that, "It kind of hurt my feelings when people think that– I just kind of left it at that." Such incidents are often felt as the other person trying to make them feel ashamed of what they do, insinuating that only a person with suspect morals could be a stripper. These feelings are not only resisted but in such instances they often choose to withdraw from the situation though it may have made them angry. These women tended to see such reactions as either jealousy: "part of their anger towards you is that you do live your life for yourself and they're jealous", or hypocrisy: "They'd rather examine your life because they have never looked at their own and seen all the fuckin crap in there." These women tend to see those that criticize them as not being without fault in their own lives. Thus they tend to approach others with caution: "I don't feel badly about it once I've had time to talk to somebody (laughs) for a while. So at least they get a sense of who I am." There is also a strategic avoidance serving to protect the self: "I didn't ask them what they did–The other one was just to sort of keep conversations off of things." These women, however, could also take delight in letting people know what they did, getting pleasure from other's shocked expressions, "cause it would just blow their mind." One woman mentioned that the only time she would make an effort to hide her past as a stripper was when she applied for jobs; here she would write "entertainer" on application forms and wait until she was asked for specifics before revealing herself, often stalling until they "had known me a little bit and liked me."

Not only did these actions protect the self but they allowed people to get to know the "real" person before they found out what they did for a living. In some cases these women needed to end relationships as they developed as dancers since their former friends had difficulty accepting them in their new work role. This was particularly true for these women at the beginning of their careers as they found out "who your real friends are." These women perceived other's reactions as reflecting jealousy, envy, criticism, and at times hostility as these comments indicate: "how could you take off your clothes?... doesn't that make you feel weird?", "Oh well she has an attitude cause she's a dancer." For many of these women their primary friendships would be with other strippers as non-stripper friends eventually were let go.

There is also the issue of their sensitivity to being judged and that they will evaluate people for being the kind of people who "would never judge you for what you do. It's who you are." In this respect these are people who they trust and are comfortable with in sharing their life as a stripper. Others would not be understanding of them as strippers or be comfortable if they were invited to "hang out" in the stripping context. Thus, in some cases there is a splitting between friends who are comfortable and those who are not comfortable with their occupation. This was exemplified in Jennifer's story in which she found difficulty in sharing her life as a student with her stripper friends and conversely her existence as a stripper with friends from school. Each group had difficulty understanding her in the other context. Several of the women in this study noted that friends outside of the business have difficulty interpreting their behavior: "when you go to the bar you do act a bit snotty because you're around people all the time and you don't like it when people come up to you all the time and bother you." In such cases these women would deal with the person quickly and assertively: "I turn around and immediately tell the guy to f.o. my girlfriend is shocked." Understanding their friends perception that they are being rude, these women feel that their friends do not understand that they are bothered by men constantly in their job and do not want to put up with it in their everyday life. In these instances strippers may use their stripper persona to be assertive–to deal with a situation swiftly. In return their friends may perceive them "as being cold". One of the women noted that when she went out with non-dancer friends she would "have to tone myself down a bit." Friends also have difficulty

understanding their values such as the importance they place on appearance; viewing them as shallow or their concerns as trivial.

I use the theme isolation to encompass the feelings of loneliness that strippers are faced with, the distancing in their relationships, as well as the exclusion that they feel from the stereotyping process. The majority of the women that I interviewed stated that travelling is lonely as revealed by these comments: "it's lonely like it is in the city but this is my first time out of town and its been really lonely," "it's really lonely most of the time," "I remember standing out in the highway before they had bus stops in some of those little towns. I'd be on the highway in the middle of the night with my bag, it was weird." In order to combat these feelings strippers will "read a lot," "watch TV," "do my exercises," "cause you know you're so bored." This is in direct contrast to many of these women's feelings that they had at the beginning of their careers when travel seemed to be a glamorous prospect. Several of the women, however, also mentioned that at times being alone can be important: "I can only be around people for so long and then I need to be by myself. You know, quiet time, quality time with myself–I think a lot." For Jill being alone related to the importance of escaping from her alcoholic parents in childhood, giving her a space where quiet was welcome: "I've always had that loneliness that isolation. And even now I like still have to be by myself. It's something I grew up with that was actually comforting to me–to just sit by myself and have no noise, no one screaming and yelling and fighting."

Feelings of Being Understood/Mistrust: Personal Relationships

> look I'm standing naked before you don't you want more than my sex
> I can scream as loud as your last one but I can't claim innocence.
> (Amos, 1991).

All of the women in this study experienced difficulty with their personal relationships. These women noted a tendency to form relationships with other entertainers as indicated by the following comments: "dancers have a tendency to attach themselves to musicians because we both travel, because our life styles are similar, and because we can relate a little bit to what the other person is going through", "the men they date are in the

entertainment business either in bands or wrestlers or other...". These people were more likely to form attachments with strippers because they understood the constraints of time and travel. People outside of the business find it difficult to understand these constraints as these statements suggest: "he couldn't handle me being away", "he didn't understand that it takes a lot of money to get started in this business –he said well what are you doing with all your money?" In one woman's experience men would typically fall in love with the stage character but eventually "the wig comes off!" The relationships with men who were entertainers also proved to be problematic for the women in this study despite the acknowledgement that they had a shared understanding. The following expressions speaks of their experiences: "he always thought I was gonna cheat on him," "he was now a big Vegas star and he didn't want his girlfriend to be one... I thought what a hypocrite... he's trying to change me... he loves me the way he wants me to be and that's not me," "when you weren't on the road and you were at home a lot of the times you were struggling to get work in town and all the stresses of the job and stuff would kind of filter down to your personal relationships." Several of these women mention that their independence was not well understood by their partners; "the people that I was involved with– were jealous of the business," " because you end up being quite independent and I don't think a lot of men appreciate that." Eventually the majority of these women came to realize that it was not the job but that "I realized it wasn't the problem, the problems from within." Paradoxically many of these relationships ended as their partners treated them in the stereotypical ways characteristic of outsiders. Being treated as an outsider by a partner led to feelings of exclusion, anger, and betrayal. For some this produced a longing for attachment to someone who will understand them, a loneliness that is existential. This feeling was exemplified by Jennifer who noted a lack of connection between her university life and her stripping. Finding someone who she could share her love of art and films with was doubly difficult as she poignantly spoke about leaving a theater excited about the film she had seen, and there being no one there to share it with.

Though there are many problems in their relationships, some of them did work for periods of time and these women were almost universal in their opinion that they worked because they were understood; the comment "he knew the real me" typifies this feeling.

Angela's husband was a performer with a circus and now he is on the road with her helping with her show and taking care of business arrangements. Their relationship is working based on their common understanding of the nature of her business. He understands that part of her work entails posing for pictures or talking to the customers. Nevertheless his understanding has not prevented him from feeling nervous while watching her perform. This underscores how the sexual connotations of these women's work made it difficult for their boyfriends. These men often felt jealousy, uncertainty, anger, and confusion. In several cases they vented their anger onto their girlfriends in the form of emotional abuse and accusations of infidelity. The capacity to distance oneself from these women's behavior in their job setting and not to attribute personal relational meaning to the contact they may have with others seemed to be one key to maintaining a relationship with a stripper.

Trust/Mistrust

A stripper's relationship with her agent is an important one since it is the agent who is responsible for booking her into clubs. The women in this study felt a great deal of ambivalence towards agents with the majority of them viewing agents with suspicion. Typical of these sentiments are the following statements: "pretty darn suspicious of them–agents and agencies" and "some agents are genuinely concerned about the welfare of the dancers. Other agents just look at it as a way to make money off these girls." These feelings are often the result of the perception that they are being manipulated:

> Actually I have a good friend that's an agent right so I'll work for him–then this agency will get mad and phone and say what are you doing, you know we're helping you out here and they shouldn't you know. They cheat you. They want you to be theirs, and don't go work for anybody else. So I told them I'm going to what I want to. Like our agents are working for us. You know what I mean?

Being verbally abused, or as in this case hearing about someone being abused contribute to their mistrust: "I have heard him on the phone just insulting them I mean calling them fat ass bitches, pigs, blah, blah, blah, not worth the money you're making." Instances of being lied to or cheated are also part of these women's experiences:

> I think they would tell you what ever they wanted to tell you to get you to work where they wanted you to work for whatever price that is–and that price would not necessarily be a fair price to you–this agent will tell you that there's absolutely no work anywhere else, except for work at this club–so he gets this fifty dollar girl into a club for forty dollars making the agent look good. Meanwhile this girl believes that there's no work anywhere else. You know which is nine times out of ten bullshit, like if they're cancelling a booking on you they lie to you about the reasons.

Most strippers do not consider agents to be authority figures (with the possible exception of novice dancers) and generally respond assertively to agents' attempts to control them: "I'll flat out call them liars to their face," "you just sort of try to work within what you know–without selling yourself out," "or you can freak out, get mad at them". In some cases a negotiation is attempted: "or you could just say Ok. fine, this is what you're saying what the situation is. Here's a good solution for it, lets get one happening." One woman mentions that her agents are being very helpful to her while at the same time "I've heard a lot of bad things about agents about how sleazy they can be." Angela's approach was one of being able to convince management that she could perform even though at the time she did not possess the skills they required, while at the same time having the confidence in her ability to learn them so that she would eventually get what she wanted. In contrast to these opinions Jill considers her agent to be a good friend and at this point in her career can't be bothered with fighting them to get her own way. Overall the women in this study had the general feeling that agents should be working for them, but instead they assume a possessiveness that stripper's are resistant to. Several of the women intimated that others held a patronizing attitude towards them: "club owners, agents, don't think of us as business people certainly. We're just strippers." While several of the women mention that they have viewed agents as friends at one time or another, generally their statements reveal that for the majority of them, their relationship with agents contains an underlying suspicion related to the feeling that they are being manipulated.

Gilligan (1982), Miller (1986), and Surrey (1991) have noted the problems women encounter when their loved ones expect them to be self-less. The women in the current study were all independent or in the case of the younger women becoming increasingly so. This

was a characteristic that their partners had difficulty with. They did not appreciate how important stripping was to these women. Several of the women noted that partners would expect them to take time off work when they wanted them to. These women learned how to be self-reliant as they become less dependent on others. Sometimes the men in their lives were predisposed to interpreting their need for autonomy as being cold, uncaring, or aloof. These women, however, did not tend to appreciate partners who they perceived to be clinging or dependent and became sensitive to this behavior. Other strippers I have spoken would become angry when partners would "whine" about not seeing enough of them or having their partners forgo their own lives to be with them. These women spoke about feeling smothered by the relentless attention. As several of them noted it was important for men to be able to take care of themselves rather than rely on them. Balancing relational needs with the need for autonomy is a difficult task for women as Gilligan (1982) has suggested and was especially so for the women in this study.

These women also voiced their opinions vociferously if they felt they were not being treated well. In this regard they resembled the girls who were classified as whistle blowers or political resisters by Brown and Gilligan (1992). These girls were concerned with relational integrity and would blow the whistle on what they perceived to be behaviors that were harming relationships. They resisted the political games that girls frequently play in which they deny what they know to be true in order to be nice and gain the favor of others who they wish to associate with. In doing so they select who they will form alliances with in order to maintain relationships even though these relations are not based on their true feelings. The women in this study evidence a similar style to those who resist such games as they asserted themselves in their primary relationships. When they did so in their dealings with agents or management they would often be labelled as "bitches". Nevertheless "bitching" often got them what they wanted or gave them the satisfaction of voicing their concerns. It also reflected their need for control and sensitivity to be treated fairly. This was most clearly demonstrated in the stories these women told about socializing in their everyday life (e.g., going to the bar with girlfriends) where they would often choose to be "bad girls", expressing how they felt directly, catching their friends off guard. At these times they did not care if others chose to see them as a "bad girl" since this was easier to deal with than

putting up with a situation they did not care to be involved in. Jennifer noted how in her early days as a stripper she was much more concerned with how others perceived her and would take steps to play up the "good girl" in her. Now she understands that being a bad girl can be an advantage–she could use it to act decisively and maintain her personal integrity. These women also demonstrated thinking and making decisions in a way similar to the women described by Belenky et al. (1987) as subjective knowers. These women did not trust others and often would make judgments by relying on how they felt about something and a pragmatism defined by the circumstances they were faced with. For several of these women (Jennifer, Jill, Alice) authority figures had failed them and the only one's they could fully trust and rely on were themselves. For these women learning how to rely on their own judgment and gut feelings were crucial and could be seen in the stories the women told of being alone and having to deal with difficult problems. It was related to what Jennifer called a certain kind of confidence, a kind of "street smart" sensibility. This is consistent with their growing sense of independence, control, and agency. Like the women Veeder (1992) interviewed in a study of decision making these women balanced instrumental factors, such as concern for roles, responsibility, and justice, with expressive factors, including concerns for relationships, feelings, and affiliations.

Similar to Belenky's et al. (1987) findings the women in this study were able to begin to put themselves first and for them it was a source of strength and satisfaction.

B. Prelude: Everyday Self and Persona: Integration and Differentiation in the Self System

> We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful what we pretend to be.
> Vonnegut Jr. (1968).

In the following section I deal with the idea that the women in this study see themselves as two different people. A real self which lives their everyday life and a persona who is the person performing on stage. I also present ideas related to the embodied existence of these women and the influence of their bodily feelings on the real self/persona distinction. I have left the discussion of the customer–stripper relationship to follow the

section on the real self/persona because I feel it exemplifies many of the stripper identity elements and how they are used. These elements exist in and are formed through relationship with others and in interaction with the attitudes and values that these women have developed both in and out of the stripping context.

C. Psyche Embedded: Embodied Existence

> What tied me to my body was not so much its desires as the desires it aroused in others –the more (both desire and others), the better. Through it (my matter, so to speak) I mattered to others, and thus mattered. (Goldstein, 1983, p. 104).

Following from the philosophies of Langer (1957),Young (1983), Gendlin (1994), Fraleigh (1987), and the position adopted by Gilligan, Brown and Rogers (1990), it is my contention that the psyche, our sense of self, is immanently a bodily existence. In an occupation like stripping where the display of body is the raison d'être it is important to examine how these women feel about and experience their bodily existence and its relationship to how they perceive themselves.

All of the women in this study acknowledged that they have come to place value on appearances: "I always say that's what keeps me looking young cause I'm surrounded by beautiful women with nice bodies." and "We end up placing a lot of value on our appearance because we have to. Hair, nails, sun-tanning. You know what it feels like to look really good most of the time." This is directly related to the physical nature of their job and the central importance of how they looked to their ability to make money: "I took better care of my body as a dancer that I ever did. Well one of the reasons is because I was making money off of it." For some this pride in the body was restricted to the job context: "Like in every day life I'm not conscious of how sexy I look in front of other people." Taking care of the body may entail a good deal of time, money, and effort: "on her four hour break she has to go to the hair salon and she's got to worry about her nails. But you know it's stupid stuff but she's up to four o'clock in the morning by this time to wash her hair." Thus, it is not surprising that several of the women expressed a sense of relief in being able to "...just become plain Jane." This body consciousness is not unusual in the athletic world in general (e.g., see

McPhee's essay in the New Yorker, January 1965, on Bill Bradley) and is often seen in artistic dancer's descriptions of their experiences (e.g., Bentley, 1982; Brady, 1982; Kirkland & Lawrence, 1987). The following statements by ballet dancer Toni Bentley (1982) highlight this point:

> I sometimes worry that when I stop dancing and start living, my incredible consciousness of physical beauty is going to be a real problem. Especially with men... I suppose everyone has prejudices, and ours are physical. We can't help it; the first things we notice are bodies. (p.19).

For some of these women taking their clothes off for the first time was not a problem since they came into the profession with a comfort towards the body as the following statements suggest: "I've always been comfortable with my body–it's nothing in my family." or "I was around nudity all the time at school [Art College]." Others became increasingly comfortable with the nudity as they developed as strippers: "When I first started I was always insecure about my boobs–and I don't care anymore. I'm not insecure about em." This statement also suggests a certain amount of self-objectification. Unlike artistic dancers, however, these women objectified themselves more in terms of how they looked, rather than how they moved (Brightman, 1993). This comfort with their own bodies and with the idea of nudity in general is supported by the following statements: "...nudity and dancing aren't unattractive things, either one of them," and "I mean nudity among strippers is nothing–phhh." Their attitudes towards breast implant (cosmetic) surgery exemplify their openness about the body and while some of these women did not see surgery as a viable alternative for them personally others fully supported the procedure. They all, however, accepted people's choices in this matter. For these women cosmetic surgery was a business decision (it enhanced the 'product') as well as a way of compensating for what they perceived to be flaws in their bodies. As noted earlier a number of the women emphasized that part of the reason that they were able to form such quick and close relationships with each other is due to spending considerable time with each other naked or in their underclothing and thus, it was difficult to be anything but informal and open in such an atmosphere. The comfort they had with their bodies mirrored their mutuality in relating. This was also found in Keefe's (1993) interviews with erotic dancers. Ballet dancer Gelsey

Kirkland (Kirkland & Lawrence, 1987) also noted the degree to which she and her colleagues emphasized bodily concerns, including a focus on what looked beautiful. These women also involved themselves in cosmetic surgery with much the same concerns as the women in this study did.

Even though these women were comfortable with nudity they did evidence signs of nervousness. This is still present in Jill's experience, and though she has been stripping for 12 years she states that she still gets nervous when going up on stage in a big club. Another states that, "I still shake–girls that have been in the business four, five years say that they still shake sometimes. It never goes away but most of the time the adrenalines up." Most of these women have overcome their initial level of nervousness though they all mention having an "adrenaline rush" when performing on stage.

Strippers develop a matter of fact attitude towards the body and in speaking about their bodies: "Strippers are clean. I have to show my pussy for a living, look at it everyday, five times a day. Most women don't even have a gape at that for years." However, people outside of the business find it difficult to understand this attitude:

> When I got my boobs done right, all the dancers are like "oh oh they're so hard" right, they just touch, even–a friend of mine that I went to school with he said "How do they feel ?" I said "Well feel them". He said "No! I'm not going to feel them."

As noted by Jennifer, the friends of strippers from outside of the business have a hard time dealing with their language because they often deal with issues that "are really loaded." In several cases these women mentioned that they have to be more conscious of their embodied existence because outsiders may perceive them as being crude in their language, or interpret their posture and gestures as sexual. Many of these women had noticed that they reach, bend over, open their legs, and are less restricted in their use of space and bodily movements than women in general tend to be (Young, 1983). In this they are probably more like female athletes who develop feelings of power and agency in terms of their bodily comportment–emphasizing attributes such as fitness, agility, rhythm, and fine motor control (Connelly, 1995). The following statements attest to these sentiments:"My body has changed a lot–I'm starting to tone up now and it makes me fell a whole lot better about myself." "I

feel like a fucking Amazon." "And other times I felt um, I felt that I was really strong–I'm really physically fit."

Given that these women become comfortable with nudity, and see stripping as nudity (and distinct from sex shows), it is not completely surprising then that they were universal in their declaration that stripping was an asexual mode of being for them: "No I don't get a sexual turn on by it at all," "Because for me it's just nudity it's not sexuality at all. And the thoughts that go through my head on stage aren't sexual at all," "You have more of an awareness of sexuality–so you're detached from it, because you can't really experience it." What appeared to be a sexual experience from the point of view of the audience clearly was not for the women in this study. For these women it is the creation of an illusion–it merely looks sexual: "That that creates a visual picture and you learn how to create that illusion. But that's not necessarily what you're feeling. You might think about what looks sexy, but it's more of an intellectual thing." These women felt pressure to be sexual on stage and they often struggled to maintain a look that gave the appearance of being sexy: "I think it was a struggle for me. To be sexy or sensual." Several women mentioned that they had to remind themselves to be sexy. This occurred even for the most seasoned of performers like Angela who placed emphasis on the importance of being sexy. These results may suggest that there is a denial or dissociation from their sexuality, however, Young (1983) notes how the visual mode is primarily a male form while females are more kinesthetic in their orientation. In addition, others have noted that for women sexuality tends to be fantasized about within the context of a personal relationship, and is more touch oriented than visual (Ellis & Symons, 1990). This may help to explain why these women stated that they have difficulty understanding how their portrayal is a sexual experience for men. This does not preclude, however, the possibility that these women are treating the body as an object or that they are presenting to the audience, what Langer (1957), in reference to artistic dance experience, might call a "virtual gesture". Langer suggests that "The dancer's actual gestures are used to create a semblance of self-expression, and are thereby transformed into virtual spontaneous movement, or virtual gesture. The emotion in which such gesture begins is virtual, a dance element, that turns the whole movement into dance–gesture" (1957; p. 180). Following up on the point Langer is making, it is likely that these women are not

presenting the feeling of being sexual itself, but rather an act that looks like they are feeling sexual. In this respect I believe the strongest hypothesis is that the women in this study are presenting a virtual self or persona to the customers.

It appears that there is a great range and regional variation in the intimations of sexual experience or fantasizing about sex on stage among erotic dancers. Many of the women in Keefe's (1993) study enjoyed the sexual aspects of their work and that it allowed them to be turned on while being paid for it. These women's experience sharply contrasts with the women in this study. This may be due to the fact that whereas the women in this study saw themselves primarily as entertainers and were both physically and emotionally distant from their customers, the women in Keefe's study tended to identify themselves as sex workers. Several of the women in Keefe's study viewed their work as an opportunity to play with their own sexual fantasies while having an actual sexual experience. It is possible that for these women there was a mix of virtual gestures through play acting, and actual sex as the following statement suggests: "Sometimes I'm dancing as me, a lesbian enjoying my own sexuality. Other times I'm playing a straight woman and how a straight woman is being sexual." (p. 174). In Keefe's study the context is one in which the women danced on a stage often with other women behind plexi-glass where there was little concern for elaborate costumes or a theatrical performance. For the women in this study, however, their performances involved a mixture of theater, dancing, magic, or other entertainment elements that they felt could be a part of a twenty minute performance.

Many of the women in this study noted a self-consciousness that moved in and out of their awareness during performance. This awareness reflected their concerns with how their bodies were moving and how they appeared to the customers: "Because we think about what we look like, trying not to fall over, whether or not we should do a pole move now, whether or not, you know, our heels are going to break, how slippery the floor is, keeping our balance. You know, stuff like that." The concern with how they looked was most prominent in their initial experiences as strippers, however, it was also a distinction they made between their life on stage and their everyday life: "You have to be aware of am I standing tall? Am I smiling? How does my hair look? How does my make up look?" Some of these women also noted being more self-conscious of their appearances as they noticed

that they were being watched by the everyone in the club. This was felt as part of the pressure to perform, thus just being in the club could become a performance.

These women also spoke about being aware of their relationship to the audience while on stage: "I was a lot more aware of how they were responding to the things that I was doing. You're aware of everyone around you," "I would enclose everyone within my space." Several women noted that this level of awareness was considerably stronger than in their everyday life. In part, this seemed to reflect a need to be conscious of where audience members were, due to their increasing physical vulnerability as they stripped down.

The women in this study speak about feeling differently about themselves while they are stripping or when the stripping persona is active. This is felt at the level of bodily experience:

> It's not quite like edginess but it's like a heightened kind of awareness of time, space and um, where things are like where the car is, I suddenly sense where the car is in the parking lot cause I have to know that when I leave, right? And it's important to know so that when I leave on a moments notice kind of thing.

This difference was also felt at the level of lived time experience: "You spend so much of your time in between shows–like you do things 'inbetween' shows–I don't say 'in between' shows. I say inbetween, like inbetween is something."

The persona has its own posture which is tall, forward, assertive, and aggressive. It can be an intimidating presence reflecting the feelings of control, strength, and power that these women possess on stage. I suggest that these postures were the embodiment of their lived experience of feeling powerful, confident, and in control. Thus, when Jill describes the persona as an intimidating presence she was also referring to her comportment; the way she looked at others and the way others perceived the way she was looking at them.

The stripping context is one in which control of the female body is attempted by management and agencies and is resisted by many of these women. These attempts, while infrequent, range from the subtle to the blatant as illustrated in this example:

> Well it was you know they used to say that thing about keeping a quarter between my knees and you know I was very modest when it came to the floor show thing. I

had a guy, um, a manager–who was doing this at me (makes spreading gesture with her arms) (laughs) who was trying to motion for me to be spreading my legs and I finally went to him–and I went look, you know what my show is like. I've been here before. If you didn't want me here doing the show I'm doing then you shouldn't have hired me.

This story also reveals that strippers draw their own personal boundaries with respect to what they consider to be lewd. Thus for Jennifer and Alice they did not go out of their way to display their genitals while others were less concerned: "I try not to spread a lot during my show, and stuff like that. I try not to, I do sometimes, like if I'm making money I do." All of the women recognized that their occupation has sexual connotations, howeve,r some downplay that aspect. For example consider the following contrast: "You definitely use your body to make a living and you should conjure up some of you own sexuality when you put it on stage." or "I was trying to appeal to their humorous side rather than their horny side."

I have found that while the ideal 'Barbie doll Image' is the dominant one, and is the one that, generally, will garnish the most financial reward. In spite of this there is a great variety in the body shapes of strippers. Some club owners will tend to book strippers that conform to these ideals. For example, several women noted club owners who preferred women with large breasts. Management may harass those who do not conform to their preferences either directly, by confronting them and giving them a hard time while they are working making sure that their criticisms are heard by staff and stripper alike, or by restricting their employment opportunities by not booking them as frequently in the future. Although physical attractiveness was valued by these women, they, for the most part, placed greater personal value on women who knew how to perform and especially valued their counterparts who had dancing ability.

While the literature on dance emphasizes the subject/object split in dancers, Brightman (1993) intimates that there is an underlying unity to the mind/body which undermines the subject/object split. This view is consistent with the philosophies of Merleau-Ponty (1962) and dance philosopher Fraleigh (1987). As Brightman has suggested it is more an imaginative function than a splitting of being. Thus, she states, "Her body is

more than an instrument–it is necessarily the ground of her being in the world." (p. 2). Both Brightman and Fraleigh consider these moments in which the self is looking at parts of the self as a dialectic between the self-objectifying and integrated experiences characteristic of being fully in the present. Hanson (1986) suggests that the self has the ability through the use of imagination to objectify a part of itself. These sentiments hold true for the women in this study as their consciousness moved from looking at the self as others may be seeing them to their full involvement in their performance. Their self-conscious concerns with their bodies were primarily focused on whether or not they looked sexy or on safety and performance concerns with respect to their movements on stage. In this view the subject/object split prominent in descriptions of dance experience can be seen as a product of the imagination and a natural function of the self system.

D. Everyday self/Persona

> DANCING dancing girl and when I dance for him somebody leave the light on just in case I like the dancing so I can remember where I come from.
> Amos (1991).

The distinction between the everyday self (or real self) and a stripper persona was drawn by all but one of the women (Mary the youngest stripper who had been only working for two months) in this inquiry. These women drew a number of distinctions between who they were in their every day life versus themselves in the stripping context. These distinctions dealt with facets that were personality characteristics, forms of social discourse, as well as lived bodily experiences.

These women felt differently about themselves as strippers often viewing themselves as different people when on the stage as the following statements suggest: "I'm not [name]–that's just a character that I have created", "I look at myself as two different people. I'm Jackie when I'm on stage, and when I'm off stage I'm Lee. I'm back to my person." These women experienced their stage performance as another person or as a character which they distinguished from the everyday self in various ways:

For me it happened the moment I stepped on stage, the music's going I step on stage then I just became this other person. Like I mean in normal life I don't walk around men grinding my hips and (laughs) sticking my tongue out at them, (laughs). Even in my bedroom I'm not that kind of person. I'm not–I don't like to be in control of the situation and walking around and try to be this seductive woman you know. I mean I'm not like that.

Jackie's fun and oh yeah, kind of stupid and she has fun with people and Lees more, you know, leave me alone. Jackie doesn't have a boyfriend for twenty minutes, Jackie wants to dance and that's all she wants to do, and Lee wants to go home and visit her parents–and have a family –Jackie's just a person, she doesn't feel anything or whatever, it's almost a cold person, no feelings.

This movement away from "my person" could be disorienting: "I was definitely Jill all the way up until I stepped on stage and I'd have to remember Holy Shit! This is what I look like! Big blond hair and you know I created such a thing that I'd forget sometimes what I looked like." In a similar vein a distracting comment can bring one out of character: "Sometimes if a guy does or says something stupid–I can drop the [stage persona] and be [real name] and I hate when that happens." For several of these women getting up on stage or hearing the music for their show was the trigger for them to get into character. For others it was simply their presence in the stripping context. This change in the self was usually not deliberate but rather the process was felt as coming on: "Its like ah, resigning yourself to your situation." In getting into a stripper mode they were feeling differently about themselves–it was a felt shift in awareness which involved concomitant changes in their embodied existence: "...not quite like edginess but it's like a heightened kind of awareness." The women in this study noted that they were very aware of their relationship to the customers and in particular of how the men were responding to their actions. Resigning themselves to their situation I believe implicates the power of context to trigger shifts in the self structure–they became another self.

This shift left these women distanced from their everyday self–the self living their everyday life. Their statements also suggested a distancing from their 'real' feelings. The feelings which they presented may not be real but rather virtual in the sense that Langer (1957) uses the term. These feelings have the character of being conceived, as distinct from "feeling or emotion actually experienced in response to real events" (Langer, p. 181). These women were all aware of the importance of performing in their shows and of appearing to like what they were doing on stage: "Just go up there and have fun and try to get them to have fun too." This could be difficult at times: "You know some days you just don't feel like smiling," "...you gotta go up there and pretend that you're happy and having a great time." "If you look like a miserable bitch it takes away from your show (laughs)." The virtual feelings and gestures they had during the performance covered over real feelings they may be having though if they were angry being able to maintain a smile could be very difficult. The importance of smiling was noted by all of the women in this inquiry as the following comment emphasizes: "I think it's fifty percent of your show."

In contrast to the women who experienced their being in the world differently as strippers, Mary, who is in the process of forming a stripper identity, describes her experience as follows:

> A lot of girls will act different on stage than from what they really are. See I act myself on stage. I act real friendly and shy, but I make eye contact and I smile, but I'm still shy and I try and look as innocent as I can. And that's what I do in person right, I'm the same both ways.

Mary, in her attempts to "leave that life on the stage" is finding that there are facets of her stage life that are encroaching into her personal life and it is interesting that some are bodily experiences: "Sometimes I'll uh, like I'll just be standing in the shopping mall or something and I'll kind of do a step or something like a dance move–it just comes without me even thinking." In spite of Mary not seeing herself on stage as different she sees herself as less shy and more assertive in her everyday life. Stripping is changing her and she is integrating aspects of her experience as a stripper into her everyday self.

Several women noted the importance of separating the stripper persona from the real self while in the stripping context: "I say always keep a real self, separate from the product.

Rookies confuse the two and end up thinking that the product is the real self." This comment implies potential problems with their self esteem: "that If I'm getting forty dollars that girl that's getting fifty is a better person than me." In addition the persona, in distancing itself from the real self, protected it since it was a depersonalized mode of being. In this way negative comments could be seen to be reflecting the persona and not the real self: "Whenever the product is affected I think phhh it's not Jill it's [name]."

While the women in this study saw the stripper persona as distinct from the self in their everyday life they also viewed it as a part of the self structure: "Like that's a character I have created but it's definitely part of me." This distinction could be felt within the self structure as they struggled to integrate disparate parts of themselves:

> ...this difference between the way I handle dancers and would be fellow students or whatever, those two parts of my personality are really, very real, each of them, very real parts of me but they're not–they don't seem to be. Do you know what I mean?

In this instance different roles are seen as disparate parts, distinct in the way she lives them, and in their presentation to others and she has found it difficult to see them as parts of one self. In this description Jennifer seems to be alluding to a state of being similar to that described by Gergen (1991) who suggested the possibility of having several different and seemingly disparate selves in one self structure. Several of the subjects in Keefe's (1993) inquiry created a persona to explore the playful sexual sides that they did not experience in their real lives. These statements elaborate this point: "In my case, aspects of my persona which I hadn't lived out before came alive on stage, and that was something that I consciously went there to create for myself. I notice when I stop dancing that an edge of the persona isn't available to me." "What this type of work brings out of the women is an aspect of persona that they might not have lived before, and that's the free acting out of the high powered, erotic woman." (p. 122). The feeling of being different personalities is one that is apparent in artistic dance forms as this comment by principal guest artist of the Royal Ballet (London), Sylvie Guillem (1993) indicates:

> It's two different personalities I think, and not only for myself. I think when you go on stage, actually it's a difficult tension. I don't know if I can explain it–on stage I

> am free, I am myself sometimes, I am somebody else other times. I can express whatever I want. –So it's quite comfortable for somebody to have all the possibilities in the world and to have all the facets. You can have many faces, many characters. You can be violent: you can be in love: you can hate: you can do everything. In life it's much more difficult. You don't live alone. On stage you can.

Guillem's statement while supporting the idea of a virtual self and gestures also indicates a difference between the classical dancer and the stripper with respect to the persona/everyday self distinction. For the women in this study leaving the character on stage seemed to be more difficult as was keeping the real self away from the stage. This was largely due to the ever present stereotype which necessitated that these women be more wary of others and protective of the self. In addition, the ballet dancer has a more well defined character to play on stage and does not engage the audience in such a way that allows for personal interactions to occur. The triggering of, or intrusion of, real self elements is therefore not as likely.

Brightman (1993), extending Langer's (1957) notion of virtual gestures, suggests that a virtual self is created... "an imaginatively created persona through the dance." This seems to describe the process engaged by Jill in the creating of her "creature" noted earlier. Similarly the other personae experience the stripper persona as 'other' from the everyday self. This persona does inhabit a subjectivity; but, it is a different subjectivity from the everyday self. The women in this study stated that they felt different in their stripper persona–their conscious experience of their world at the time was different as reflected by differences in the contents of their awareness. Hanson's (1986) suggestion, that the self uses the imagination in a representational way to look at the self differently, is also relevant here and consistent with Brightman's suggestion of a virtual self. Hanson intimates that it is the activity of the imagination which creates the self and that seeing oneself as others might or the reflexivity of seeing oneself as different, is an act of imagination. Thus the women in this study, in feeling that they are different may be invoking an alternate or virtual self; an imaginative self that differs from the everyday self they are accustomed to seeing themselves as. I would suggest the possibility that the virtual self could displace real feelings of hurt

as it keeps the real self distant. I further propose that when these women felt hurt by customer's comments this was indicative of a movement forward into awareness of the real self. They became vulnerable because they felt the comments and took them "to heart"–to the real self.

The Stripper Persona in Everyday Life

All of the women in this study felt they could use the stripper mode or persona in their everyday life. This could be invoked purposefully, for example to intimidate someone: "a feeling comes over me, uh, I'm full of self possession, and I give out that don't fuck with me. It'd be a big mistake." This was often done when they felt threatened: "by the time I figured out everybody was giving me this thing I then had to be my peeler self, persona, and which is really a strong intimidating person I can draw upon," and "nobody wanted to walk near me." In addition it was frequently used when they wanted privacy and didn't want to be bothered by others: "when you go to the bar you do act a little bit snotty because you're around people all the time and you don't like it when people come up to you all the time and bother you." These women found that it could be "easier to be rude than to be polite and put up with it for fifteen minutes when it doesn't work and then it's easier to tell them just to take off." Their friends typically perceived them as being cold in their dealings with other people: "My girlfriends have though of me as being very cold and nasty that way." This, however, does not conform with how they saw themselves in their everyday life: "I'm actually very patient with most people." These women found that their friends do not understand or appreciate that they have to deal with rude people on a constant basis in their work and that they do not want to do so in their personal life so they may act to "beat them to the punch." At other times it could be confusing for their friends: "If I become angry or something they go phew! Cause here's this cute little [hair color] whose all of a sudden flipping out and they don't know where it comes from– it doesn't make sense to them."

While their friends saw them as hard, cold, or confusing, their abruptness and assertiveness allowed them to work in an environment where they were subject to abuse and needed to protect themselves. Thus, in response: "I created this persona that was so hard on the outside to protect a really soft inside." These women were also aware that their

informality, comfort with the body, use of language, and bodily comportment could be unnerving to outsiders and thus they would "tone" themselves down or be more wary of how they were presenting themselves in order to protect their friends and acquaintances. This is similar to what Bentley (1982) noted in her journal as the difficulty ballet dancers have in being someone other than their dancer selves. Thus in public they felt as if they were still performing, highly conscious of how others are perceiving them. For some of the women in this study there was also a feeling that certain elements of the stripper persona were becoming integrated into the everyday self. These elements included such things as self-reliance, assertiveness, control, and tolerance.

E. Creating Distance: Relating to Customers

> Such hatred leaps in them,
> my beery worshippers!
> That, or a bleary
> hopeless love. (Atwood,1995, p. 34).

Values, Assumptions, Beliefs

> What use is it to believe that beauty is a good, when metaphysics has sold her in the market place? (Winterson, 1995, p. 13).

Issues of control, vulnerability, and attention serve to define the stripper's experience on stage. Underlying their experience and helping to delineate their relationship with customers is a set of attitudes and values about displaying the body, how they view men, and how they view society's reaction to them. The women in this study tended to develop a negative attitude towards men. Contributing to this predisposition were their experiences in childhood, their personal relationships, and their experiences of being harassed at work before they became strippers. These women began to be suspicious of men and their potential to be "jerks." As they formed their work identities their negative perceptions of men were reinforced. Boyfriends were often viewed with suspicion as men "who would try to leech off you" or if they were mistreating their girlfriend "we think ah,

stupid bum." It was difficult to trust men. While not all of the women disliked men they all had negative experiences with them and saw them as potentially abusive particularly in this stripping context requiring that they be suspicious of them.

These women saw themselves as independent women who valued and took pride in their self-reliance. They became assertive and expressed their feelings openly. Their experiences with people outside of the business led them to see others as hypocritical. They felt they were being stereotyped based on other's ignorance of who they were–they were being judged solely on the basis of their occupation. Faced with the stereotype on a daily basis these women became wary of outsiders and protective of their identities. These women viewed their work as nudity down playing its sexual connotations, while having difficulty maintaining the sensual image they were supposed to project. Nudity and the human body were seen by them as a natural part of human functioning, one which society perverts through its repressive attitudes. They do not see themselves as portraying women differently than those found in women's fashion magazines or films. Their feeling that society is hypocritical in singling them out for criticism has some basis in the work of Kagan (1984) who noted that when principled standards lose their moral force to produce feelings of shame or guilt they become conventions. These women in their justification of their work state that for them it is just nudity and nudity is a normal human condition and is widespread in media and art. In other words it has become a convention. Taylor (1991), in the Massey lectures, has noted that in our culture, individualism and concerns for self-fulfillment are widespread. This has the form of a relativism (based on a principle of mutual respect) which suggests that people have the right to develop their own lifestyles as they see fit based on what they see as important to them. People should be true to themselves in seeking self-fulfillment. As many others have noted this can lead to the obviating of concerns for things transcending the individual. While many who are critical of this philosophy (seeing it as narcissistic,or hedonistic) have trivialized the people who hold it, Taylor suggests that there is a powerful moral ideal behind it; that of authenticity. What I would like to point out here is that the ideology of strippers is not that much different from the philosophy that Taylor discusses and is based to some extent on concerns for authenticity and naturalistic views of human nature. There is also a sense of the vitalism that Berzhonsky (1993) discusses as one of the three

primary foundations of assumptions and beliefs for identity formation. I would suggest that for the women in this study their underlying assumptions and beliefs, rather than being radical or deviant forms of thinking, are actually in accord with those of many in society. In this respect their occupation can be viewed as a creation and reflection of our society. For these women then, their feelings about the hypocrisy of their critics may have its basis in shared assumptions.

Control/Vulnerability/Attention

> Speaking of which, its the smiling
> tires me out the most.
> This, and the pretense
> that I can't hear them.
> And I can't, because I'm afterall
> a foreigner to them. (Atwood, 1995, p. 35).

A sense of control is demonstrated by all of the women in this study, however, for Jill, Jennifer, and Alice it was a central aspect of their being. The following comments speak to this issue: "I think for me it's that male control thing. In that I needed to be in a position of dominance almost you know to overcome that and to regain a certain amount of self-confidence in handling men"; "because there's your typical adult–child of alcoholics, not having any control–and that's the way I am. I have control over my world finally because I had no control or no say over the hellish things that were happening when I was younger." Having a sense of self-efficacy–that their actions will impact on another in ways that they intended them to was vital to these women. For them stripping was seen to be therapeutic: It met their needs in allowing them to express their pain, hurt, and anger with others who understood them. For these women having control over an audience of men was "very satisfying."

All of the women spoke about the feeling of control that they had on stage. The following comments speak to this issue: " I felt really in control of the image I was trying to portray."

> As a woman I am in control of my sexuality because I can walk off anytime. Because I can just walk away and shut the whole thing down. So in that sense you have a certain amount of control. It puts you in a position of power and it might be, to everyone else a very sexual thing but you're not feeling that so you're distant. I think then in control of that situation, and yes, you can do or not do whatever you want on stage.

Here work frustration can be dealt with by stopping the show, a luxury few women in other occupations have. These comments also summarize a number of important points with respect to their relationships with customers. These women felt they were in control of their sexuality and for them this control was expressed in terms of their shows being an asexual experience for them. In fact, most had difficulty understanding how it could be a sexual experience for the customers. These women felt powerful on stage and this sense of power was felt in their embodied existence. They felt aggressive, assertive, and powerful as part of their feeling of being in control.

The sense of being in control was demonstrated by the fact that (a) the women recognized that by being an object of desire there was "a lot of power in beauty," and (b) that as such "you're the one whose, you know, doing whatever it is to inspire whatever kind of response right, so you're the initiator which is important."

The feeling of having control over their audiences could also be a playful, positive experience as the following statement suggests:

> If I'm on stage and when I first walk out some guy's not even looking at the stage he's yakkin to his buddy, drinking his beer, not really paying attention and I go over to his side of the stage and look him directly in the eye and start doing whatever I'm doing, dancing, and you know trying to be a bit sedutive, and all of a sudden he's not even hearing his buddy anymore (laughs).

Jill was able to see her performance as a manipulative game where she would:

> Give them the idea that they're the kings of the jungle... So I could make a guy like whose 90 lbs and five foot one think phh I can throw a fuck at her. Because I give them that. I make them feel that way. I look at a guy on stage and I look away first cause that's a submissive role.

While all of the women in this study would state that they are in control of their stage show there are times when club management would try to influence their show. Jennifer notes that in her show she has been modest in the showing of her genital area and a few times management has told her to "spread" more. She has asserted herself in these instances by telling them that was not what her show was about. Alice has had similar "problems". Many of these women did not like customer's and management's requests to have them "spread" more and the majority of them would rather wear g-strings than stripping down completely. These views were also similar to those expressed by Keefe's (1993) interviewees, many of whom made a distinction between customer's requests and demands to perform certain acts. Maintaining control of their self expressing was important to them even while they would accept most customers requests to perform certain acts.

Vulnerability

> You think I'm not a goddess?
> Try me.
> This is a torch song.
> Touch me and you'll burn. (Atwood, 1995, p. 36).

The feelings the women in this study had of being in control were balanced by a sense of vulnerability. The stripper persona was a mode of being which emphasized their sense of control while on stage. There were, however, moments where this sense of control was upset by customers comments and behaviors.

Dealing with unruly customers placed a strain on these women's sense of control. These women found that "men will become insulted by the funniest things." The following reasons were given by these women: "you live your life for yourself and they're jealous"; "because you don't smile at them"; "because they can't fuck you they'll look for the fatal flaw"; " men just like to be jerks"; "they're obnoxious"; "because they don't understand"; "guys get angry if you give the same look to someone else." There were other times though that men would become obnoxious in spite of their best efforts. In either case these women would use a host of strategies to protect the self from the abuse.

The type of response to abusive behavior was dependent upon a number of factors including; what kind of a day they were having, if they were having a good show or a poor one, what stage of the performance they were at, level of physiological arousal, the status of their personal life, the type of comment or behavior, and how it is said.

Thus, "if you're having a good show you have a tendency to just go hmmm you know big deal, whatever." This was the most common reaction where they did not feel vulnerable and could just shrug the comment off. However, if they were having a poor show and "if you're having a really heavy adrenaline thing happening–somebody says something to you that offends you, you turn around and you're going to be a little more angry just because–you're pumped up." These women may respond by chastising them or by returning the insult: "You just kind of roll your eyes and go "what grade did you get through in school?"" or "I don't come and bother you when you're working at MacDonalds do I?" Another response mentioned by several women is to ignore the offender by moving to another part of the stage and letting other men look at them, purposefully excluding the offender: "we just go fine and move away from them completely and go to the other side of the stage and there's some guy whose sulking, poor guy, you know that's what you get when you're mouthing off."

These women felt more vulnerable near the end of their shows when they were naked and it was at these times when their responses to men's abuse would be stronger. They expressed the strongest reactions to being touched or intruded upon physically particularly when their backs were turned to the audience. These were circumstances where they would react automatically out of fear and could hit the customer. In many cases the women had to respond or risk harm. In the several instances that I was witness to a situation where a stripper was physically threatened the bar staff intervened successfully only once–arriving swiftly enough to prevent physical contact or assault. What is even more astonishing is that I have never witnessed customers standing up for a woman being threatened. Night club management varies greatly in the protection they offer these women. Certain club's management made little effort to remove abusive patrons while others were very consistent in protecting the entertainers.

How these women felt about themselves on stage could influence how they felt about themselves in their everyday life where having a bad show "could be really hard on your ego." More prevalent, however, was the encroachment and influence of their every day life into the performance arena where having good shows were a result of having stability in or a positive life away from their work. If their personal life was problematic this could easily intrude into their stage shows: "If things were real lousy in my life at that point and I was having a lousy show, um, I would let the audiences responses affect me personally." These were times "when your self-esteem is low and that just kind of adds to it."

The more experienced performers were better able to distance themselves from negative feelings–they knew how to stay in character. In part, this was a function of their attitude, since they viewed it as a part of being a professional entertainer. In Keefe's (1993) study the women noted that they felt angry with customers who were abusive or who did not acknowledge their personhood:

> Eye contact is also my way of insisting that I am a complete person, that I'm not a pussy nor a pair of tits. I am a sexual object and I am creating an erotic fantasy, it's not like we have a real relationship, by establishing eye contact I am insisting that I am fully human. (p. 260).

There is also a positive sense in which the women in this study felt vulnerable as I have alluded to above in the section on relationship. I refer here to the feeling that they have of openness in dealing with difficult issues such as abuse and violence from their own backgrounds–there is a readiness among them to freely and candidly discuss such topics that outsiders would be uncomfortable with. Thus, the ways in which strippers are vulnerable play a role in their sense of sisterhood–it is part of their shared understanding of their being in the world which helps them to connect to each other in ways that outsiders may see as unusual.

Creating Distance

> On all fours now, grinding my ass so the middle-aged businessman who's wandered over can stuff a fiver in my T-bar. Well, good, I'm thinking–I'm worth something. Sherilee not withstanding–and then I just want to

disappear. (Atkinson, 1995, p. 14).

These women at times would strike up conversations with the customers. Mary, uncertain of the customer's reactions to her states, "I'll make lots of eye contact and I'll have lots of conversation with the people in the audience cause it makes me feel better." Alice feeling pressure and not wanting to be the center of attention states that sho would have, "...more eye contact with them, I'd talk to them– I didn't like to be in the center by myself the center of attention."

At times these women became curious about the customers and would talk to them about their experience of their shows as Jennifer relates, "that what they do when they're sitting in an audience, is make... you know, mini bets on what color our toe-nails are painted and whether or not our boobs are real." At other times they would sit down with a customer "I'll do a PR thing, I'll go and have a coke." In general the customers enjoyed this 'personal attention' however for the stripper it was a relationship that was "very surface." In these instances the persona would go along with them keeping personal information to themselves. Thus, as one woman states, "the guys in the audience–knowing your real life–they don't get that." The women in this study would give them false names and "a whole bullshit life to go with my stage persona, and I don't like giving them the truth– the theater of it is fun because you, uh, you can entrance people." This is also the case with their true feelings as the following comments by Lee summarize how these women tend to feel about personal intrusion: "People see enough of me on the outside, I don't want them to see the inside of me too. Like if I'm sad of something I'm not showing that on stage–I'm being personal enough with them." Thus, the persona keeps their real feelings and their everyday selves distant from customers. They protect their personal life.

The women in this study were often approached by men seeking more personal contact after their shows. They viewed such attempts as intrusive since they not only did not know these people but also did not particularly care to know them better: "you got some drunk asshole leaning on top of her trying to invite her to a drink. And telling her he's shy with girls and if he could have lunch with her it would cure his shyness." Several of the women recognized that customers felt that they were entitled to get to know them better and

as Jill suggests; "now they think they know you or are entitled to know you–and as far as you're concerned they're just some strange fuckin guy in the audience." As noted above many of these women developed "stories" to tell the customers.

The stripper persona is a part of the self structure that is seen by the women in this study as hard, cold, assertive, aggressive, both protective of the real self and distinct from it. On stage the persona is in control of her sexuality, and ideally of the audiences reactions to the image the persona is projecting. The persona also projects feeling towards the audience but these feelings are virtual. The feelings of the real self are set aside, they are not active. If, however, something unusual occurs or a customer pushes the wrong buttons the real self becomes active and the individual will feel vulnerable. She will let their comments or behavior affect her personally. I suggest that it is the presence of the real self, even if only momentarily that becomes the vulnerability. As they react to others they may activate the persona to deal with the harm or intrusion. These women speak about keeping the real self separate, of not allowing the customers to see their real feelings or to intrude on them in a personal way. They create the persona to put distance between them and others. The women in this study have stated that while performing they will give acknowledgment to certain customers by looking directly at them and smiling and this seems to satisfy the customer that he has made a pretty woman smile at him. But it is these customers, the ones who expect personal attention, who are most likely to become abusive and feel slighted.

Overall, the women in this study see their customers as representing a wide range of people from students to truck drivers to doctors and lawyers. They see them as lonely men, men just out for a night with the boys, or as the kind of men who would go to a strip bar to abuse a naked woman. These men are not well understood by them and they have some fears about the loners who are abusive for no apparent reason. The behaviors of customers such as their forwardness are not well understood either: Mary has had men come up to her and ask for kisses and hugs. This baffles her as she states, "What can you think of them?" Similarly these women wondered how some of the men can sit from noon until midnight watching strippers, "Don't you have a job?" Their general feelings toward customers are summed in the following statement: "And you gotta think too you really see a poor cross section of men. Not all men go to peeler bars so you see just a small percentage."

Attention: Personal Expressiveness

Attention was a factor in all of these women's identities, however, for Mary, Lee, and Angela it was of greater importance than for the others (for whom, as suggested earlier control was of greater import). These women all noted that they sought attention and this was part of their self-definition as children: "Of course I've always been an actress, you might say all my life, since I was a little girl, putting on plays and skits for the neighborhood kids, for anyone that would watch me." "I always wanted to be like a singer or an actress or model or something where somebody's looking ar you, you're the center of attention, that's what I wanted" "I was spoiled rotten as a child". These three women pursued becoming entertainers almost immediately upon graduating from high school and all three have or are advancing rapidly in the business. They clearly enjoy stripping as demonstrated by these comments "If the guys are sitting all there having a good time, having fun with it, then I can have fun with it too." These women experienced a high from being on stage as this woman's statement reflects: "there's a charge, to having everyone watch your every move. Having all their attention...I think that's the biggest compliment. It's my job! Good. I'm glad I made everyone horny (laughs)." In contrast some of the other women avoided being the center of attention: "I'd much rather hang around the edge of the stage and just joke around with the people." In this last instance this woman felt uncomfortable and alone if performing at the center and in speaking with customers she felt they were all in the show together. Thus for some women this kind of attention took their minds away from being naked on stage and having a whole crowd of people looking at them. Here there is some sense of feeling like an object on display which personal connection displaces.

When these women were feeling good about themselves their stage show reflected many of the characteristics of Flow that Csikszentmihalyi (1990) writes about including: the loss of self-consciousness, feeling of control, blending of action and awareness, focused on the present, and distortion of time. This was experienced when they were able to stay in character, when "I was really into it and the crowd felt I was really into it." In such states their worldly cares were not present and they felt connected to the crowd. "Getting into it" was described by several of the women and reflected their positive attitude at the time. The

following comment addresses this issue as well as the role of the audiences response to the energy that they projected during performance:

> I just love to dance and if the audience is giving me any kind of response it'll just push me even harder. Even if they don't give me a response, sometimes I just get lost and caught up in the music and my show and I'll just keep pushing and pushing to draw out every, any, little ounce of response that I can from them.

In fact several of the women mentioned the role of music in their enjoyment of performing: "I just get lost and caught up in the music." Several other dancers I spoke to who were not a part of this study suggested to me that music was a way of controlling the crowd. In addition, a few of the women in this study stated that they used music to lift their moods if they had been having a bad day or were not into their performances.

F. Other Aspects of the Self-System

Independence-Self Reliance and Assertiveness

One of the distinguishing features of the stripper's existence is their independence as exemplified by these comments: "they're all independent minded," "I think of myself as the type of person who's independent and I don't need to rely on other people." All of the women in this study recognized the importance of independence to their sense of self, however, for some this sense of independence was expressed as a necessity developing from their childhood. This was the case for Jennifer, Alice, and Jill. Coming from homes where abuse was present they needed to become self-reliant in order to take care of themselves and/or their siblings. For them traditional authority figures proved to be unreliable–they had no one to rely on but themselves. For these women coming from situations in which control was absent it became central to their understanding of what it means to be self-reliant. The others, however, acquired a sense of independence during the process of becoming a stripper. For example, Mary described herself as shy and insecure, reliant on her parents. Her story reveals a growth in her confidence and assertiveness as she becomes increasingly less reliant on her parents. It must be recognized this has developed in part because of her parents level of support which gave her a secure home from which she could explore and differentiate, always knowing that her place in her family was secure. In contrast Angela was

a risk taker, an impulsive child who moved out of the security of her family home at the age of seventeen to go to Hollywood. Her story emphasizes how she grew from being a naive young woman into someone who could take care of herself and manipulate others. There is a striking similarity between those developing their independence prior to becoming strippers and those who developed increasing levels of it as they formed their work identities. For both groups independence forms out of being in situations where others cannot be trusted, where one is alone to defend themselves, and in the feeling that others do not understand them. Jennifer's statements points to this issue: "But they have never dealt with being alone in [town] broke and having to get back onto a plane with no money and dealing with a club owner who doesn't want to pay you because he's being a jerk." Examples such as this highlight the importance of being able to take care of ones own self interests in situations where no help is in the offing. They also reveal that independence entailed the acquisition or development of assertiveness. This gave these women the feeling that they could handle difficult situations while also enhancing their confidence in themselves and their abilities to cope.

The occupation of stripper is that of an independent business person. As such, one needs to make their own connections with agents, manage their finances as a part of their business, purchase costumes, tapes and make travel arrangements. This aspect is a large source of pride that strippers possess–the idea that they are in control of their businesses and that they are able to take care of themselves. This finding is in accord with research on female entrepreneurs who felt an increased sense of agency as well as personal satisfaction through their work (Young & Richards, 1992). Several of the women noted that their partners had difficulty understanding the importance of their jobs. This could result in the expectation that they give up their work if their partners felt they should spend more time together. In these instances seldom was reciprocation expected.

Freedom/Constraint

The women in this study were almost unanimous in their declaration that freedom was one of the attractions that stripping held for them. They were free because they were able to travel, they could choose to work whenever they wanted, they could (within limits)

choose where they wanted to work besides the freedom afforded to them through their financial gain.

These freedoms, however, were balanced by a number of real and perceived constraints: Travel limited the time they could spend with friends and interrupted their social lives. Pursuing a hobby or cultivating their interests were much more difficult given that they performed four times a day over a thirteen hour period. This made attending a college, even part time, very difficult. Clubs included rules of employment which constricted their right to have visitors in their rooms or to have their pets with them for company. Performing itself has guidelines according to the number of songs and time limit as well as industry conforming provincial regulations barring duos and limiting the use of props. While these performance related strictures are generally not a problem for these women other constraints had a particularly large impact on their social lives. Personal relationships were difficult given the sexual connotations of their employment and their relationship difficulties were further compounded by the time limits and travel required by their employment. Partners often had difficulty accepting the fact that their jobs entailed that would be away on road trips for extended periods of time. The constraints of time was felt most strongly by Alice who was the only stripper in this study with children:

> After I had my children–my schedule became really hectic–I had to be up early, you know spend time with my children in the morning. Drop them off at the baby sitter, run to the hotel, get ready, do some running around– travelling out of town was tougher because a lot of times I wanted to take my daughter with me. So I would try to find travelling partners–close friends who would travel with me.

These limitations could lead to frustration with their effects expressed in existential in terms by limiting personal development and opportunities for enjoying personal expressiveness. If they did not take care of themselves by taking time away from the business, burn out would often ensue.

Virtually all strippers that I have spoken to have mentioned the issue of their reputation and how they believe that their occupation limits their choices in the future. As they see it, becoming a model or public figure would be unlikely given the prominence of the stereotype. As one stripper notes, "no modelling company would take on that

reputation–and there are a lot of pretty girls in the world who don't dance." Thus, as mentioned previously, strippers protect their identities from real prejudice; in this they are vulnerable. Jill stated that in being stereotyped and viewed negatively by outsiders she is free to do or be whoever she pleases. Being viewed as a "bad girl" contains within in it a freedom to be. Jill, while acknowledging that being a stripper may restrict opportunities in other occupations, felt that in artistic circles it could be an advantage.

The stereotype can be viewed in some ways as prescriptive identity elements that are resisted and challenged on a daily basis (Grotevant, 1992). The women in this study challenged the perceptions of others in order to upset their stereotypical notions. This was seen to be the case for several of them in terms of their intelligence which they made no effort to suppress. These women used aspects of their everyday self and brought them into contexts where they were identified as strippers. By the same token their efforts to get others to know them first can be seen as both protective of the self and active in terms providing the opportunity to present a self that is contrary to the stereotype.

Meaning/Meaninglessness

The two primary ways in which the women in this study experienced their work as meaningful was through the degree to which stripping met their needs for control or attention. The importance of control was central to the experience for Jill, Jennifer, and Alice. For Lee, Mary, and Angela attention was the most important factor in their ability to derive meaning from their work. There was also, however, the factor that Waterman (1993) calls personal expressiveness or, as Csikszentmihalyi (1990) calls it, Flow. The people who viewed stripping as an opportunity for creative expression, Angela, Jill, and Jennifer, were seen to derive varying degrees of satisfaction from stripping. While for Jennifer stripping was seen as a compromise between her need to express her creativity and to be financially solvent it was primarily a job for her. Similarly, Alice viewed stripping as a means to provide for her young family. For Angela and Jill, however, stripping was a career. For these women the ability to put together an interesting show provided a challenge for them that many of the other women did not feel to the degree that they did. Putting together a show could be just as interesting as performing itself. They had a long term perspective

working for years to perfect a show, constantly adding to it and changing it to keep their interest up as well as providing them with a challenge. They viewed their show as a product to be sold rather than just as a performance.

The feelings alluded to prefiously were more prevalent for the women who emphasized the importance of attention in their motivation for being a stripper. For Jill and Angela, who were experienced feature performers, these experiences were, for the most part, under their control and they worked hard to achieve those states. For others their work often fell into a routine where "it was just get ready go up there do your thing and leave." For these women personal expression took a back seat to the pragmatics of making money. These women also did not tend to see themselves being strippers over the long term, for them it was a job not a career. In contrast Jill, Angela, and Mary viewed stripping as a career. Angela and to some extent Mary had definite long term plans in terms what they wished to gain from the business and how it may fit into future plans. Jill spoke about being involved in video productions, costuming, and helping other strippers with their shows. To date she has been successful in helping others with their shows. Recently she had to declare bankruptcy and this has put her plans on hold as she realizes she will have to work a few years longer in order to have enough money to start a business after she retires from stripping. In the same way Angela sees herself as owning a club eventually and continuing to be involved in show business. In fact she has been successful working to put together promotional videos for entertainers. Mary the youngest of the group is faithfully saving her money with her parents help and plans on a long career as a stripper.

Integration/Differentiation

In this section I take a closer look at applying the processes of integration and differentiation at the level of the self structure. In doing so I incorparate the identity formation research of Marcia (1980) and contemporaries and in particular the recent work of Josselson (1987) who has examined the identity status of women. From the perspective of identity research one might suspect that these women would most closely resemble those people which Erikson characterized as experiencing an identity crisis and who solved their problem by taking on a deviant identity. Such people would most closely resemble the

diffuse identity status. Upon closer examination the women in this study resembled a variety of status affiliations sometimes in the same person. Josselson (1987) has also noted the complexity of people's lives in suggesting hybrid statuses to account for difficulties in classifying people's identities. It must be also noted that the women in this study did not undergo a formal identity status interview but rather that in examining their stories these women demonstrated in varying degrees certain criteria of a given status.

While in general most of the women in this study seemed to begin their early adulthood in the moratorium phase and moved into the foreclosure status fairly quickly this underrepresents the complexity of their stories. Upon closer examination it seems that Mary, and to a lesser extent Lee seem to fit the pattern of a foreclosure identity status more clearly than any of the other women in this study. They retain the features of needing security from their families and appear to have incorporated some of the family values into their identities. These women moved towards increasing differentiation as they strived to integrate new experiences into their self structures. These include such things as their growing assertiveness and independence. This transformation was particularly strong in Mary's case and formed a noticeable contrast with what she considered to be her real self. As Josselson (1987) has noted foreclosures made identity commitments with a minimum of exploration and did not experience crisis in the identity formation process. While these women did not retain their parents standards regarding morality they did negotiate the terms of their relationship with them and they did acquiesce to them in terms of following certain rules such as avoiding alcohol and "being smart" and "doing it right". This however, suggests that for these parents the possibility exists that for them, nudity was not what Kagan (1984) calls a principled moral standard but rather a convention. Josselson's (1987) comment that foreclosure women retained the status of 'good girls' while they were "dominated by need for others approval, but no ones approval was as important as the esteem of her parents" (p. 55), is especially apt with reference to Mary. These women as they undertook the quest to become more independent felt the importance of the security of the family. In addition they also felt guilt in becoming dancers. This was expressed most clearly by Lee who could no longer maintain the deception with her parents.

As noted above integration and differentiation are two processes which if working in a complementary fashion in a system, whether it be a social system or a self structure, may lead to the formation of a more complex structure (e.g., complex personality structure). For the women in this study several of them came from families which could be described as differentiated in structure. For these women their personalities tended to exhibit relatively greater differentiation than did their counterparts. This was the case for Alice and Jennifer and to a lesser extent for Jill as well. For them other roles were also prominent; the role of mother for Alice and student for Jennifer. Alice and Jennifer also demonstrated less commitment to stripping as a long term career. Both of these women, as well as Lee, saw stripping as a job more than career. All of these women spoke of stripping as meeting current needs for control, attention, and money, but saw themselves in the future as doing something else. For Alice her focus was on raising a family and she viewed herself as pursuing an education. Similarly, Jennifer has aspirations as a writer and also has strong interests in psychology and communications. Both Alice and Jennifer have taken time away from stripping to experiment with other possibilities. These women also saw their stripper persona's as more distinct from the everyday self than the other women. In this respect these other selves had different emphases in terms of their basic assumptions and values. For example, Jennifer's academic/artistic self incorporated feminist values which caused her to question her stripper persona wondering at times if her occupation contributed in a negative way to society's views of women. Alice's desire to raise a family prompted her to leave stripping because the travel made it overly difficult to pay proper attention to her children.

Jennifer and Alice follow a pattern most similar to the women who Josselson described as moratoriums. At this time these two women can be viewed as moratoriums in status since they are currently in new exploratory phases and are unsure of what they want to become. Both have experienced some recent frustration at their prospects as they explore various job possibilities. Both women while they were stripping seemed to see stripping more as a job than a career. Jennifer expressed her identity as a stripper as a balance between her pragmatic self and the need for creative expression. Nonetheless these women did not see stripping as a long term solution for them and while they were stripping maintained other prominent identities some of which were strong enough for them to

consider them as potential careers. Thus, Jennifer quit stripping for a while to become student while Alice quit stripping to try to raise a family. Both returned to stripping albeit for a short while before continuing to explore other options. In Marcia's theory identity statuses are defined by ones placement along the dimensions of exploration and commitment (Marcia, 1980). These two women were actively seeking and questioning various options. They were, however, uncertain about commitment. This was especially difficult for Jennifer. Personal expressiveness was suggested by Waterman as a third important dimension and for these women they were still seeking a theme which could define the best use of their talents and purpose in living (Waterman, 1993). As Phinney (1993) notes a difficulty for people in modern society is that they may have a number of competing reference groups which may have conflicting goals and views of the self. Thus, maintaining a stable sense of self becomes a difficult challenge.

The stripper persona for Jill and Angela was well integrated into the self structure. For these women they had little problem in reconciling friendships or other roles with the stripper persona. This was clearly exemplified in their identification as entertainers with stripping to some extent seeming to be a subset of a more global entertainer identity. For Jill this meant that she was able to integrate her artistic self into the stripper identity by using it as a vehicle for artistic expression viewing what she did in terms of performance art. Angela had strong affiliations with the entertainment community including circus performers and magicians. It may be argued that Angela may exemplify a complex structure considering that her everyday existence is consumed by entertainment and that she exemplifies differentiation in her attempts to constantly learn new forms of entertainment to incorporate into her stripping routines. It is clear from her story that stripping is a personally expressive experience for her. She knew very early that entertaining felt like it fit with who she was. This is consonant with Waterman's (1993) suggestion that the feeling of fit is a part of the personal expressiveness factor in identity formation. These factors which both these women demonstrate include intense involvement, a feeling of fit, intense feelings of being alive, fulfillment, a feeling that one was meant to do the activity, and the identification that this is who one is.

Jill demonstrates a similar pattern but lacks the degree of integration of the entertainment subculture that Angela demonstrates. At present Jill's self structure is differentiating but struggling to develop new skills to add to her identity as she contemplates using her artistic talents in an occupation that she has not yet created. In this she appears to demonstrate the characteristics of the moratorium status.

Finally it is important to acknowledge that all of these women had intergrated aspects of their stripper persona into their everyday selves. This finding is in accord with several of Keefe's (1993) interviewees who, as the following statement suggests transformed their self structures:

> Over the years I have become more and more identified with my persona, and more comfortable being sexy on stage than in my private life. I went through an identity crisis where I didn't know if I was Jackie or Eileen. I liked being Jackie, but it didn't seem okay in some environments. Now it's resolved. I've integrated Jackie and Eileen and that's really exciting. (p. 324).

The women in this study integrated identity elements into their everyday lives such as independence, assertiveness, control, and a sense of agency. In many cases some of these aspects were evident from their previous life experiences, however, all felt that the stripping context allowed for their greater expression and development. Particularly noteworthy here is the statement by Jennifer that it became acceptable for the 'bad girl' side of herself to find self expression in her everyday life. It was felt as a greater empowerment and provided her and the other women in this study with feelings of validation as their assertive voices found themselves.

What is evident from the individual portraits is that categorizing these women into the identity status categories is fraught with difficulty. They do not seem to fit the pattern and may represent hybrid categories like Josselson (1987) found with the women interviewed. It may also be that for those individuals who are balancing mulitiple identities (e.g., student, stripper) that they could have the form of a moratorium in one self while being foreclosed in another. In one area of their life they could be differentiating and integrating while in another they are more scattered having difficulty in integrating those elements into the self structure. The findings of this inquiry suggest that identity fits to context and that

looking at ones general self structure may betray the complexity of the self structure. For example, while an individual may seem to be differentiated as a stripper it may also reflect a flexibility in that this person may be more open to experience and adaptable to varying contexts. In this respect both Alice and Jennifer seem to demonstrate more differnetiated overall self-structures than do Jill or Angela. It may be however, that Alice and Jennifer will be better able to adapt to more traditional occupational settings. At present these questions of the relationship of different selves to identity statuses remain unanswered.

G. Toward A Cognitive Science Based Model of Being in the World

The majority of the women in this study drew a distinction between an everyday self or real self and a stripper persona. Their way of being in the world was, to a large extent, defined by their interactions with others, the contexts they were in, and the complex inter-relationships of the various elements composing their self structure. These "elements" include processes as well as the concepts, beliefs, assumptions, and values that they hold to be true. The information presented in this study suggests that certain of these identity elements in their self structure were more likely to be active in the stripping context than they were in their everyday lives. These women stated that they could consciously invoke these elements in other contexts where they needed to protect themselves or be more assertive. The stripper persona was, at times, experienced as being dissociative; as if it were not the "real me" but was still an aspect of the self structure. This sense of a distancing from the everyday self can be seen as consistent with the creation of a what Brightman (1993) called a virtual self. This virtual self felt dissociated from real feelings (that is the feelings that they would feel if the everyday self was present) with these women often experiencing themselves as being a colder person with a different voice. Others also experienced them in this way. These differences were also seen in their comportment–their postures and gestures were different from how they felt in their bodies in their everyday selves. Time and space were perceived differently. In this mode they often found it difficult to maintain the pretense of smiling at the customers when they did not feel like doing so. Often they did not want customers to know their true feelings because it was perceived as an intrustion into their lives. I believe that it is likely that their perceptions here are correct. There are many

theories of psychological functioning that are consistent with this notion, that one may have a number of identities or voices existing within the same person. These include theorists such as, Bruner (1990), Berzhonsky (1992, 1993), Gardner (1983), Gergen & Gergen (1988), Gilligan (1982), Hermans et al. (1992), and Viney (1992) among others. These theoretical positions are consonant with those theorists who view psychological functioning and the function of the brain and its processes as complex systems. These include people such as Dennett (1991), Edelman (1992), Forrest (1990), Hofstadter (1995), Humphrey, (1992) Margolis (1987), Minsky (1986), and Smolensky (1988), among numerous others. Common to these latter perspectives is a view of psychological functioning as emerging from micro-processes (termed subsymbolic or subcognitive processes) that result in larger scale symbolic processes at the level of thought, emotion, and behavior.

My suggestion is to use this idea of subsymbolic or lower level processes as a metaphor for processes operating at the symbolic level. In this view I propose that the self structure emphasizes certain elements as being active or in a state of greater probability of being active at different times or in certain contexts more than in others. It may well be then that for the women in this study, that while they have integrated these elements into their self structures to varying degrees, certain ones are characteristically more active in the stripping context. If these processes and elements are strong enough and evoked consistently enough they could produce the sense of difference that the women in this study refer to. It would feel as if one had a different self or that one had entered into a different mode of being. Highlighting this point is the contrast between Mary's experience (who had only been stripping for a month at the time of the interview) and that of the other women. Mary stated that she didn't feel differently on stage from the way that she did in her everyday life. Nevertheless in her descriptions she notes instances of the way of being she has as a stripper intruding on her everyday life. This encroachment is, I believe, consistent with an accommodation-like process in action as her self structure is undergoing change. She noted that stripping was changing her, though perhaps not enough to feel a distinct sense of self. The rest of the women described the stripper persona as a more assertive self–different in many ways from the real self. This persona had its own subjectivity, part of which were the virtual aspects mentioned above. Here, I am suggesting that the elements of the self

structure including behaviors, concepts, schemas, memories, lived bodily experience, and ways of speaking can be active or inactive dependent upon such things as context, previous experience, and the motivation to present oneself one way or another. It is possible that individual's model of the world, including one's interpretive structures, could be very different at certain times and in certain places. I also suggest that many of these elements work in concert in the form of schemas that vary in their activation levels. These schemas compete for activation in the self structure and this may result in confusion if, for example, two schemas reached a high enough activation level to be evoked at the same time. A sense of confusion in one's identity could operate in a similar way–two selves would be competing for attention at the same time and one might not know who one was at the time. Jill describes such an experience when she was in her costume and didn't know who she was.

By the same token a "distributed" self could be the result of the mutual activation of self structure elements that are reinforced and maintained by group processes. A particularly powerful influence would be the stories that are characteristic of these women's subculture. Stories may serve to reinforce particular elements and structures. This would be consistent with the views of Bruner (1990), who indicates that the narrative mode integrally involves the process of meaning making (and as Kegan (1982) suggests is one's being in the world). The women in this study have a certain way of being in the world that they share with each other which results in their feelings of sisterhood. Also consistent with this view would be the finding that these elements would be activated in situations which were most similar to the stripping context or where they felt that they needed to protect the self. I believe that some of the findings are consistent with such a view. In particular, are references that were made to the feelings that several of these women had of being more assertive and aggressive when they went out to the bar with their friends. These women either noted the presence or oncoming presence of the stripper persona, or the activation of attributes that they normally attributed to the persona. These included elements such as; aggressiveness, being blunt, using stronger language, the need to be in control, changes in body posture–more upright, forward, and a feeling of being cold emotionally. Jill's example of being at a party and activating the stripper persona when she felt others were treating her like the stereotype, is pertinant here. I believe that these elements are triggered

automatically; which accounts for the phenomenon of what I call 'slippage' (the intrusion of stripper ways of being in other contexts which several of them mentioned). (See Norman (1981) for a discussion of action slips from a cognitive science perspective.) Automatic triggerring also accounts for the feeling that it is coming on without their conscious involvement. They may, however, invoke it consiously as they see the need to protect themselves or assert themselves with others and invoke certain attitudes and justifications as they proceed to act.

A model of the "spreading activation" of elements may account for such findings and also allow for the mapping of different identity elements into clusters of activation which represent a given persona. I propose that the use of self-structure diagrams could be used to note similarities and differences between various selves or possibly in relation to the everyday self (or what one perceived to be one's 'core' self structure). Such diagrams based on identity elements derived from the interviews are shown in Figures 2-5. I have made a diagram of one woman's identity elements as shown in Figure 2. I have borrowed the idea of using color to represent levels of activation from positron emission tomography (PET). PET indicates the relative metabolic rate in parts of the brain with the red end of the color spectrum exemplifying higher levels of activity while blue suggests relative inactivity. In Figure 2 one can see that in the stripping context elements such as assertiveness, suspicion, protectiveness, power, and control are highly active. In the everyday self these elements are relatively less active while other characteristics such as intellectual, understanding, patient, thoughtful, curious, would be highlighted as more active. The shift from feeling powerful and in control while in stripper mode to becoming more vulnerable, which would involve a bringing forward into awareness of the everyday self elements, I have represented in Figures 3, 4, and 5 (based on Jennifer's and Alice's descriptions). This would effect interpretive schemas, emotional reactions, and bodily existence–all contributing to this felt shift in the process at hand. As I have suggested, for the women in this study, becoming more vulnerable is the movement or activation of the everyday self elements into the stripping context, since it is the everyday self that may become hurt and angry. This does not preclude the stripper persona from being hurt but rather that both are more likely to be feel hurt in such circumstances. Thus the image of oneself as a stripper would be challenged.

The result may be that the woman may feel a little less in control, less powerful, confused, or less capable.

I was a witness to these shifts in my observations and conversations with strippers. Their voices became more assertive and I noticed a marked shift in their awareness, postures and bodily comportment. For example, in Jennifer's case her experience was that of a shift in her awareness of both space and time. She found it strange that both these seemingly disparate parts of herself could both be contained in one person. In someone whose stripper persona is more integrated into the self structure the stripper elements could be represented by the sharing of more active elements with the everyday self. This sharing could also suggest the ease of activation of elements. Thus, more integrated self structures may demonstrate greater control over various elements. I suggest that this was particularly the case for Angela who is closest to an achieved identity status and complex self structure. The activation of certain elements and structures could also account for the feeling of coldness some of these women mentioned in their experience of the persona. In these cases the assertiveness was dominant and their understanding, nurturing side would be low in activation. High in activation would be elements such as control, power, and assertiveness. This may include a predisposition to become angry through the activation of a schema which included a feeling of justification for the anger via attitudes and assumptions regarding men. The self theory would exist in a dialectical relationship with what Berzhonsky (1993) calls the "irrefutable" assumptions. My suggestion is that not only are these assumptions refutable but that they may be different for different selves, though I am in agreement that conceptually they are likely to be more stable structures. It is my belief that while the relationship is dialectical it is likely that the drive from basic values to self theory is stronger than the reverse. In general, they would be part of the interpretive process as the "lens" through which one would see the world acting much like traditions in hermeneutic philosophy as they influence an interpreter. In Jennifer's case her presentation in everyday life is a curious, thoughtful, and patient individual. Her example of going to the bar with girlfriends was in strong contrast to her everyday presentation. In the bar, assertiveness dominates and she can be blunt and impatient with men who are "going to be rude anyway." Her friends are confused when this normally soft spoken woman became angry.

Emphasizing the point I made earlier, if the activation levels of elements vary with context and they are seen to trigger aspects that are similar then it would follow that those aspects of self, active as the stripper persona, would be more likely to be active in contexts similar to a strip bar. The data presented here suggest that this is the case (in particular Jennifer, Alice, Jill, and Lee). These women were more likely to bring forth the persona (or aspects of it) in a bar setting (where a certain amount of assertiveness and self protection is viewed as more important) than they were in other contexts such as in an academic setting or during a conversation with friends in a coffee house.

The positioning of identity elements closer to one another (within a given context) could be used to indicate a feeling of greater integrity in the self structure. Thus, in the everyday self one feels that there is more integration while in the stripper context there is greater "felt" separation between these various elements. In this respect diagrams of the self structures of Jill, Angela, Jennifer, or Alice would show the stripper and everyday elements as being relatively farther apart from each other, indicating that a more experienced stripper is better able to separate the two selves. I have attempted to show this in Figure 3 where the stripper persona and everday self are relatively farther apart than in Figure 5. Figure 5 could represent a novice's self structure where she has difficulty keeping the two personae apart. It is possible for these relationships and structures to shift; for example other elements may be added or lost, activated or not depending on the context. One's assumptions may change through experience and differ across context. It may also be, that for strippers who have a more integrated self structure the assumptions and values that they hold are more consistent across contexts.

While at this stage the model is simple, one may use both interviews and more traditional psychometric measures to obtain more time sensitive information. For example, the interview could be used in conjunction with Csikszentmihlyi's experience sampling method (1990, 1993) which can be seen as a combination of traditional and phenomenological methods. This allows for the collection of samples of people's thoughts, activities, and feelings at randomly chosen moments in people's lives. It may then be possible to gain an understanding of how people's perceptions change over time. This could be very useful in gaining a better understanding of how various selves relate to each other

and how a person functions in different contexts. More coherent or boundaried self structures could be represented by the relative closeness of elements (within a given context) while those who are more differentiated in their self structure could be represented by elements which are farther apart. These people would tend to feel a greater difference between their various selves. In the case of extreme dissociation the selves would also involve few shared elements.

The model I have proposed offers a rough heuristic for examining shifts in identity and could be used in examining the identity formation process itself. I believe that it could be possible to model sub-processes in a similar fashion allowing one to examine the functioning of the self structure at the level of pattern recognition and interpretive mechanisms. However, this is a project beyond the scope of the current study.

Intergration and differentiation operate at several levels (i.e., the self system, and the self system in relation to other systems like the family) which are related not exclusive. Working in tandem they may produce complex structures which implies that a well integrated psyche also has within its structure the potential for further differentiation. Thus, for those possessing a complex and integrated self such as Angela, the self structure is in constant motion as differentiation adds further nuances and schemas to her role as entertainer. I believe that the findings of this study are consitent with the notion of the self as an open, self organizing system–that is in constant flux similar in form to the processes of evolution recently described by Weiner: "Species of animals and plants look constant to us, but in reality each generation is a sort of palimpsest, a canvas that is painted over and over by the hand of natural selection." (1994, p. 106).

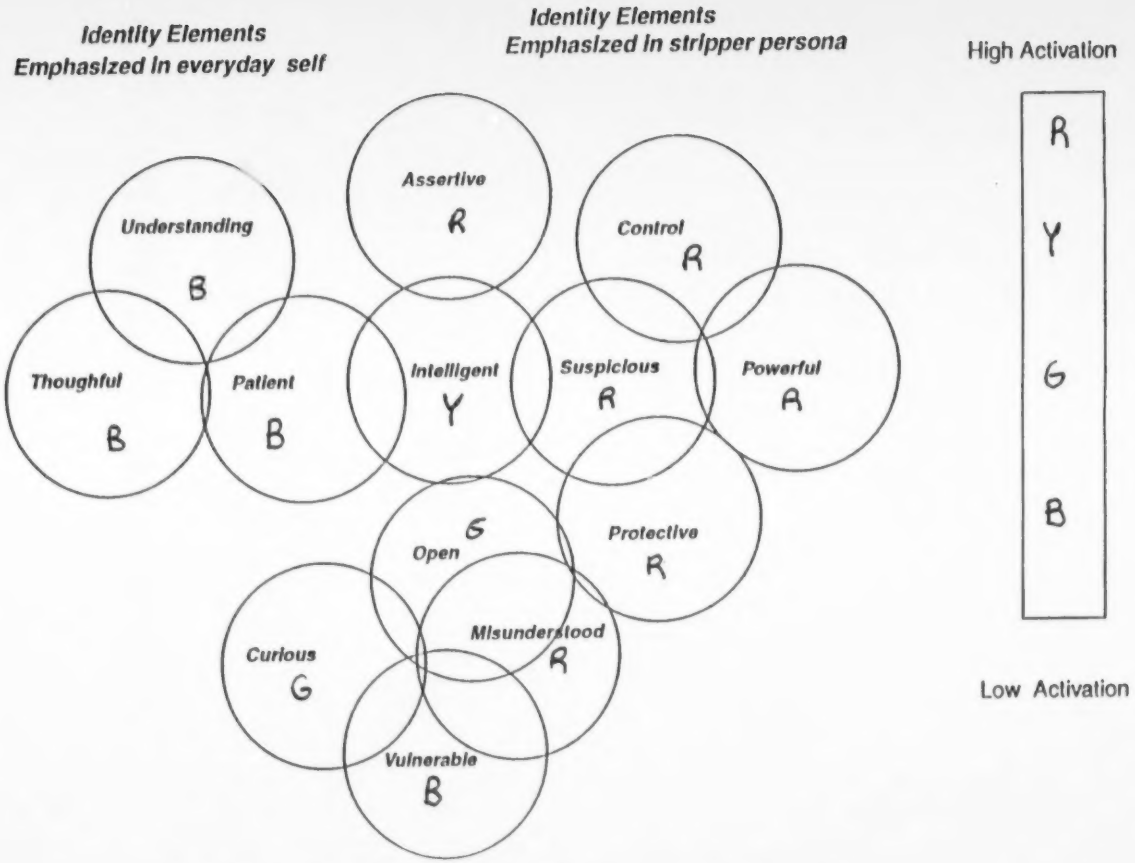

Figure 2. A diagram of the activation levels of various components of the self system. The color red represents a high level of activation. In this instance the stripper persona is active in the stripping context.

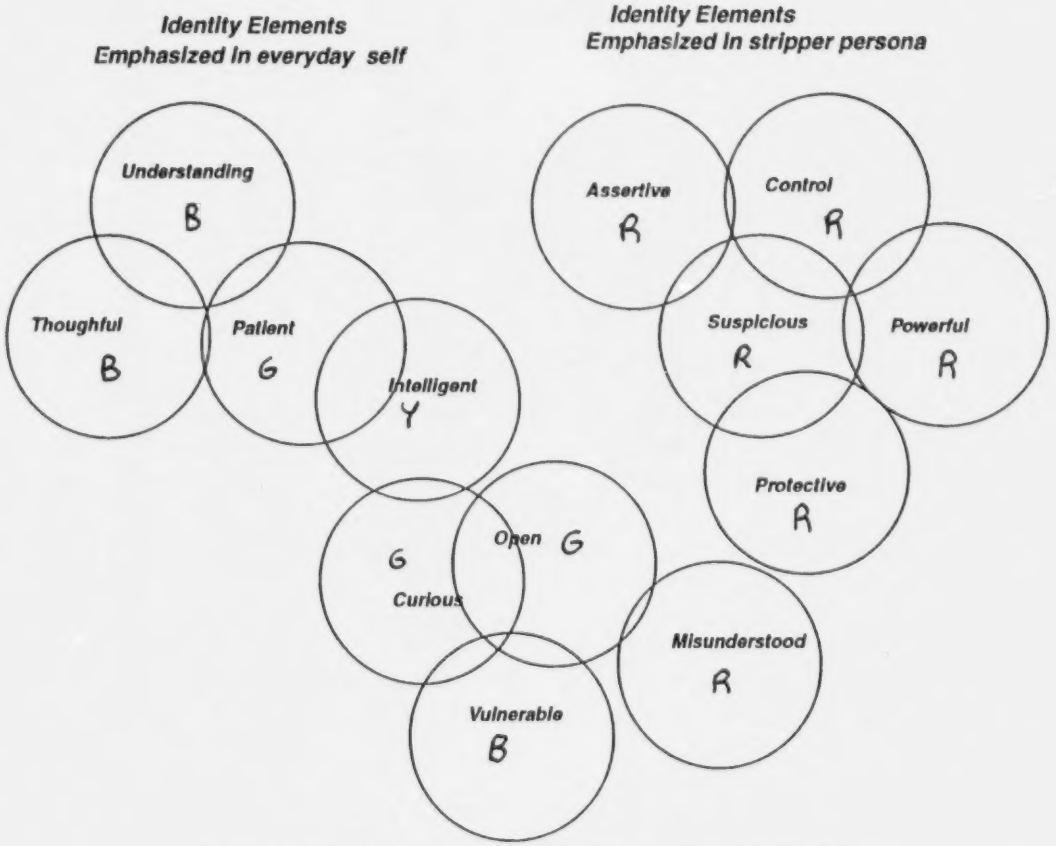

Figure 3. The stripper persona active in the stripping context. In this diagram the stripper persona is seen to be more distinct than in figure. 2. This may reflect a relatively more experienced stripper who is better able to keep the two personae separate.

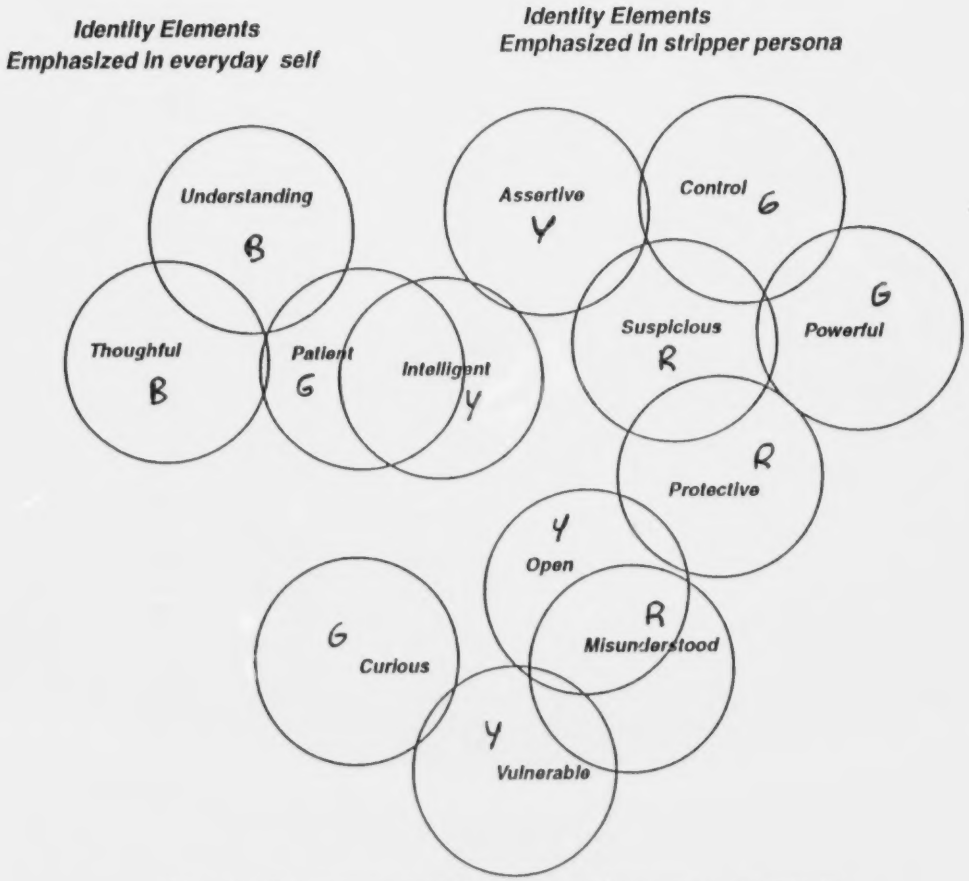

Figure 4. In this diagram something untoward has occurred in the stripping context and is effecting the individuals ability to stay focused on her job. In this case the elements of the every day self that the person wants to keep separate are activating and moving into the stripping context.

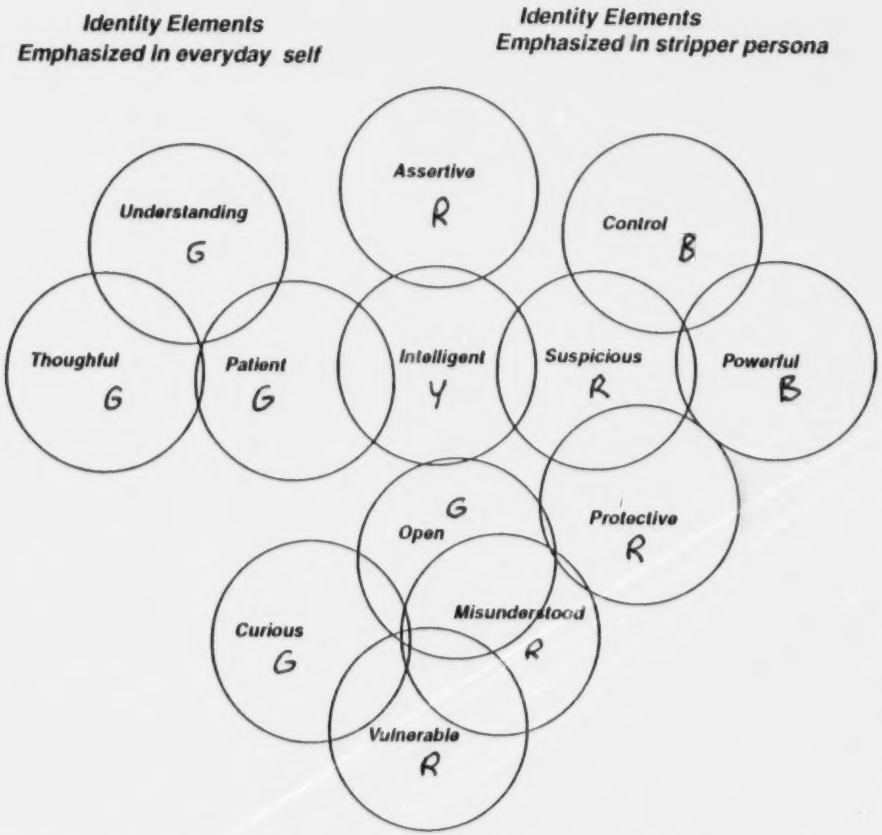

Figure 5. The stripper persona is now less active while the everyday self has become active in the stripping context. Thus the individual is now more vulnerable. As noted this may occur more often with relatively less experienced performers.

CHAPTER EIGHT

REFLECTIONS ON THE VOICES OF SIX FEMALE STRIPPERS

In this section I will summarize the findings of this inquiry, discuss its implications for vocational counselling, and put forth suggestions for further research. The purpose of this study was to examine the life world of the night club stripper. I used an interpretive (hermeneutic) approach to the inquiry which involved interviews and subsequent descriptive/interpretive thematic construction. These were used to formulate individual descriptions of these women's experiences in a narrative form, followed by a synthesis of their collective voices integrated with material from the literature. While using traditional hermeneutic philosophy as a basis for conducting the research I found myself frustrated by the overly inductive traditional approach and increasingly attracted to the psychological hermeneutics of Gilligan and colleagues where the focus is on psychological distinctions and the complexity of individual's lives. Thus, rather than analyze the data by abstracting categories over several levels I chose to emphasize the women's voices in their own words and to connect these voices with the literature. In Zwicky's (1992) language where analysis is like a laser, lyric is a bell. It is towards a more lyrical, narrative, psychological, interpretive approach that I wished to move.

A. Summary of the Findings

1. The women in this study entered the occupation of stripping for a number of reasons including: A lack of money, the desire to travel, frustration with current job prospects, the need for attention and control, and a desire to become an entertainer. Most of them were introduced to stripping by friends who were part of the business. While felt strain of some kind may have precipitated their entry into the occupation most of them had been deliberating about the possibility of becoming strippers over a period of time as long as one year.
2. These women were concerned with their relationships to family members and how their families would perceive them. This concern was particularly prominent in the

initial stages of their careers when most of these women hid their identities, for at least a short time, from their parents. Stability in these relationships were seen to be the result of their parents ability to set their preconceived notions of stripping aside. Receiving support from their parents was valued by these women. This support seemed to be related to success in their occupation. Trust and mistrust were often central issues in their relationships with loved ones.

3. The women in this study developed strong bonds with their fellow workers which I have called a feeling of sisterhood. They formed quick, close attachments. These relationships were based on a set of shared assumptions and values. These women were aided in their relationship formation by being stereotyped which resulted in the feeling that only other strippers could properly understand them. These feelings of being understood served to give them their group coherence as well as providing them with a unified voice in facing stereotyping.

4. These women often felt lonely in their travels. They often found themselves working in small towns with few people they could relate to. They also felt alienated from people in 'mainstream' society who shunned them. In this sense they felt like outsiders.

5. All of the women in this study experienced difficulty in their personal relationships, though they attributed the problems to the relationship itself and not to their stripping. Their partners were seen to be jealous of their work, disregarding its importance to them. These women were often subject to verbal abuse and accusations of infidelity. Time constraints made it difficult to form and maintain relationships and therefore, they often formed relationships with other entertainers such as musicians who they felt would understand them given their similar lifestyles. Relationships that did work were based on mutual trust and these women had the feeling that their work and its importance to them were understood.

6. Agents tended to be viewed with suspicion as these women felt that they were often being manipulated. They did not feel that the agents were working for them– they were seen as appeasing club management while giving correspondingly less

consideration to their concerns. These women resisted these attempts to control their lives.

7. Relationships with people outside of the stripping business were approached with caution. People outside of the business found it difficult to understand these women. Thus, they would avoid conversing with them about their jobs. They wanted to be known as a "person" first before revealing their identity as a stripper. This strategy was seen to be effective in counteracting the stereotype. These women also tended to avoid people who they perceived as overly judgmental since in their experience such people were critical of them and their work. Their friends often found it hard to deal with their outspokenness and in understanding their need to be assertive in social settings. These women learned that being assertive was often more effective than letting men encroach on their personal space.

8. The results of this inquiry suggest that these women's lived experiences were ontologically grounded in their embodied existence. While on stage most of these women noted a shift in their perceptions of time and space. They were very aware of how they were situated in relation to the audience. These women also felt a difference in their bodily comportment and their voices which reflected their sense of greater assertiveness and control. At times they would reflect on how they appeared to the men in the crowd–it could be seen as a form of self-objectification. For the women in this study the stage experience was an asexual one though they were conscious of trying to appear to be sexy. These women came to value appearances as part of their identities. They knew what it felt like "to look good most of the time". The maintenance of the body required the investment of considerable time, effort, and money.

9. Most of the women in this study made the distinction between a real or everyday self and a stripper persona. This difference was felt at the level of bodily existence as well as in terms of personal characteristics and interactions with others. The persona was typically seen as strong, assertive, aggressive, sexy, fun, and seductive. Emotionally it was felt as being cold, as it presented a simulated version of one's emotions to the audience–the appearance of having fun. They presented what Langer calls virtual

gestures. The results suggest that it could be viewed as a virtual self in Brightman's (1993) sense of the term. These women learned that the persona could be used strategically to protect the self in everyday contexts. When in "stripper mode" others saw them as cold or distant while they saw themselves as assertive, active, and confident.

10. The women in this study saw their work as aligned with the entertainment industry rather than the sex industry. As such, most of the women saw their work as the display of the human body–as nudity.

11. These women formed attitudes and value structure which supported their view of their work. This allowed them to justify their existence in the face of the stereotyping that they were constantly faced with. They also were reflected in how they related to their customers. They formed the basis for the development of the stripper identity and a shared world view which provided some coherence to their way of being in the world. These values, attitudes, and assumptions included the following: (a) These women developed attitudes towards men which allowed them to view men as untrustworthy, potentially hostile, sexually focused, and rude people. This view allowed these women to look down on them and to respond to customers in assertive and at times aggressive ways to protect themselves. (b) These women see their work as a display of nudity and as part of a continuum which includes portrayals of women by the fashion world as well as in films. (c) The women in this study formed a view of the outside world as being hypocritical with respect to how society perceives them and their work. (d) These women valued appearances. For some this was primarily restricted to their being in their work environment while others took pride in how they looked in their everyday lives. (e) Stripping was seen as a way of being an independent woman in our society by manipulating and taking advantage of stereotypical views of women.

12. These women felt more in control of their lives as strippers in part due to the financial reward but also in terms of being able to take care of themselves with out relying on the help of others. This was seen as a kind of street smart mentality that gave them a form of self confidence. This sense of control was important on the stage

as they felt more in control of men and their responses to them as well as their own sexuality.

13. Customers were viewed by the women in this study as capricious. While for the most part these women felt in control of their audiences there was some sentiment that this feeling was tenuous and thus, vulnerability balanced their sense of control. These women felt more vulnerable when their personal lives were problematic. Customers were seen as primarily out for a good time however the women recognized that some must be lonely, having little personal contact with women in their lives. This relates to their understanding that some men were seeking personal acknowledgment of their being. Men who became angry were seen as either feeling that they were slighted in terms of personal acknowledgment and/or as being sick or violent people who were there to be hostile to a stripper.

14. These women were protective of their identity outside of the stripping context. They did not want to encourage men who were potentially violent that may follow them or try to contact them. Thus, they took precautions to dress down while leaving the club and were more cautious when leaving their place of employment.

15. Attention was a prominent theme for all of these women, however, it was especially important for the women who became performers and for whom it was a need. Several of these women saw stripping as an opportunity to express their creativity while also becoming financially independent. The women who saw stripping as a career demonstrated many of the attributes noted by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) in his work on flow experiences. These women derived personal meaning from stripping in this way. For others control was more important in being able to see stripping as a meaningful experience. This was particularly evident in the women who experienced problems with men in their personal lives or in their family of origin.

16. With respect to the identity status research these women were difficult to classify with some manifesting characteristics of the moratorium, others the foreclosure and identity achievements. Some of these women were more closely identified with their stripper identity than others. For these women stripping was seen as more of a career. The findings suggest different patterns of integration and differentiation for the

women in this study. Women who grew up in relatively disorganized or abusive homes demonstrated relatively greater difficulty in integrating their various roles. Those who came from more nurturing homes found it easier to integrate the stripper role as they experienced greater support from their families.

17. The findings of this study were used to put forth a tentative model of the self structure to be used in demonstrating the relative importance of different identity elements across contexts. This model has the potential to show time series data as well as the relative integration, differentiation, and complexity in the self structure.

B. Implications for Vocational Counselling

As noted by a number of the women in this study the stripping context demands "certain things" from the stripper. It is not a job for those who can not develop assertiveness, for in spite of the camaraderie they often find themselves alone to deal with problems such as unfair treatment from club management and the stereotypical reactions of others who will treat them poorly. While some of these women were assertive before they became strippers, they all learned to express it through working in a context which required them to be that way. It was often a matter of survival for them. They learned to use their assertiveness in other social or work settings where harassment was a possibility. They learned that telling others how they felt and what they wanted (e.g., to be left alone) was much less stressful than putting up with someone's unwanted intrusion. To paraphrase one of the women sometimes it was better to be a bitch. In learning to stand up for themselves they learned to be responsible for their own lives. Assertive, independent minded individuals are more likely to fit into the stripping occupation that those who are more reticent.

In addition these women develop negative attitudes towards men as they come to view them as potentially problematic or dangerous. The women in this study, aware that men are potentially dangerous, used a number of strategies to combat their fears. In addition to their assertiveness they took precautions to ensure their safety. These included being escorted by staff to their vehicles if they felt uncomfortable, carrying protective devices, dressing down when they left the hotel (what they call "going incognito"), making sure of their routes to their next destination, letting others know of their intentions, warning each

other about problem customers, parking their vehicles in well lit, open areas, that were close to the hotel doors. These women developed a consciousness which resulted in a street smart mentality and in doing so became proactive in their own safety.

Women entering this occupation should be aware that they can make a great deal of money, however, to become successful requires a good deal of monetary investment with respect to promotions, costumes, footwear, music, taking care of the body, and maintaining their appearances. Those embarking on a career in stripping should seek someone's aid in financial planning. Keeping accurate financial records, seeking advice on taxes and deductions, setting of short term goals, and longer term planning–involving RRSP's and monthly deposits, should be a part of such discussions. Many of these women noted the difficulty they had managing finances, particularly early in their careers. Finally, investigating or beginning to explore their options for retirement should be underway as one embarks on a stripping career.

One of the most important relationships for strippers is with their agent. It is important to develop a professional image and solid working relationship with the agent so that they will have confidence in the strippers reliability. Assertiveness is particularly important so that the dancer will not feel that she is being taken advantage of (and many agents will attempt to do so). Further information and suggestions for choosing and working with agents can be found in Nadine (1990).

Occupational success seems to be related to ones support structures outside of the business. Thus, the women who could rely on the family of origin for support stood a greater chance of being successful. This is also true of those women who possess a background in the performing arts or gymnastic ability. Such women would be at a greater advantage for advancing their career as a stripper and should be a part of the investment they make in their career.

The stripping life can be lonely and finding a partner who can understand their need for independence and to be able to distinguish the everyday self from the stripper persona seem to be rare individuals. There are warning signs, however: Men who are verbally or emotionally abusive, overly sarcastic, controlling, or those who are struggling with occupational issues themselves, are poor prospects. In particular are those men who wish to

be involved in their girlfriends careers, who question how they manage their finances, or who want a "share" of their girlfriends earnings. Most of the women in this study have been involved with such men at one time or another.

These are among the realities that strippers are faced with and which novices should be aware of before becoming involved in stripping.

Women who consider entering this occupation should be presented with alternatives to explore which may meet their need to be independent and in control while at the same time allowing for self expression. This may include entrepreneurship and small business enterprise with suggestions for the kind of educational experiences available for the development of these types of occupations. Other areas such as the performing arts, teaching, exercise and fitness, and therapy, are vocations where use of the body is prominant and prove worthwhile to explore.

The findings in this study are consistent with the vocational theorizing of Super (1969) who developed an "approach" to vocational development in which people's vocational self concept develops in accord with their psychological and physiological attributes as well as contextual factors. In particular these women were more likely to be successful when their was congruence between their self concept and vocational self concept. These people through investing their resources in the job stabilized and consolidated their positions in their career.

C. Suggestions for Future Inquiry:

1. The mechanisms by which various identity elements relate to each other are not well understood. The current findings suggest that one avenue of approach would be to further explore the processes of integration and differentiation. How do certain elements become a part of the self structure and how do people keep elements or selves separate? At present identity status researchers are questioning the usefulness of the status interviews and are beginning to examine the relationships between context and status processes. The examination of the stability of identity formation across context may provide a more nuanced understanding to the complexity of these processes.

2. The findings suggest the importance of family relationships to occupational entry and maintenance. It would be interesting to interview family members to find out what their perspectives are. While the current findings suggest a relationship between childhood and current family relations little is known about the specific attributes and processes involved. This may also relevant to entrepreneurial success as well.

3. Little is known about the personal relationships of these women and in particular the expectations of their partners and its relationship to their sexual behavior. For example, do their partners expect them to be more sexual than other women?

4. The importance of stories and the narrative mode are in need of further exploration both in terms of their importance to self structure and group coherence. Especially important would be "stage" stories which seem to be related to the attitudes they develop towards men–how do their stories relate to perceptions of control and vulnerability?

5. The area of lived bodily experience has been neglected in the research (Brightman, 1993) in part, because of the difficulty in translating these perceptions into the appropriate language. It would be interesting to obtain more timely data from strippers (as well as other kinds of dancers for comparison), perhaps using methods such as stimulated recall or more intensive self report measures such as Csikszentmihalyi's experience sampling method. These should be used as close to the time of performing as is possible.

6. Similarly, very little is understood about the mechanisms involved in the self structure as it relates to identity formation and identity transformation at the level of lived experiences. In part this would involve the enculturation processes by which people learn how to be acceptable members of a given group. It would be interesting to examine the kinds of stories that strippers (and other groups) emphasize and their relation to novices lived experiences. It may be that these stories are used to reinterpret events. For example, Mary came off the stage crying in her first week because she thought she wasn't being liked. She eventually came to an understanding that it was just the unpredictability of the audiences and that some crowds are "just dead crowds". It is possible that more experienced strippers passed on this knowledge

in their storytelling. Another example would be having the shakes–where nervousness becomes a normal "adrenaline rush".

7. With the current findings I have suggested that a cognitive science based schema activation model could prove useful in examining the relationships between various elements in the self structure and how they relate to various roles a person may hold. The specific processes involved need to be understood at a more finely grained level of analysis. For example, what are the various processes and elements involved in control and how does this shift with context? The model also has the potential to be used in understanding shifts in the self structure over periods of time. The diagrams, through the use of space, spatial relations, color, shape, size, and pattern, could provide a multidimensional view of the self structure across context and time.

D. Coda: Strippers as Postmodern Women.

> Relationships make possible the concept of the self. Previous possessions of the individual self–autobiography, emotions, and morality–become possessions of relationships. We appear to stand alone, but we are manifestations of relatedness. (Gergen, 1991, p. 170).

The women in this study spoke clearly about their experiences as strippers, each with her own unique voice and story: Angela's bubbly, song-like voice-the voice of a performer; Mary's quiet, reserved manner; Jill–fierce, assertive, and confident; Lee's voice rising and falling in her expressiveness; Alice with the voice of experience balanced between a caring mother and a woman aware of the stark reality of her occupation; Jennifer,patient, thoughtful, philosophical as she voiced her need to be understood and to understand herself. Each voice was unique but at the same time they resonated as one in their understanding of their shared reality–it was an expression of their sisterhood. In the voices of their embodied existence, self-in-relation, and of the persona they seemed to be remarkably alike. Zwicky (1992) writes that "In fully resonant speech, the world becomes clear, language opens to presence." (p. 482). This, for me at any rate, rings true of what I felt as I listened again and again to their voices, with their uniqueness as individuals and their similarities reflecting the polydimensional nature of their life world: "In a polydimensional structure, integrated

components may transmit motion to one another. Under certain conditions of attunement, a resonance body is formed. Such structure then is capable of complex resonance."(Zwicky, p. 8)

I noted previously that I read a great deal of prose and poetry, listened to many musicians, and watched and read about other kinds of dancers as part of my attempt to further my understanding of what it meant and feels like to be female in our culture, in an occupation which this culture creates and denigrates. Thus, I cannot listen to Mae Moore's song bohemia or Amos's song-poetry without thinking of Jennifer, Liz Phair's angry, honest voice without being reminded of Jill, or Ondaatje's The English Patient without conjuring up an image of Alice. Langer, in Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling (1988) suggests that, "Art is the objectification of feeling; and in developing our intuition, teaching eye and ear to perceive expressive form, it makes form expressive for us wherever we confront it, in actuality as well as in art" (p.40).

The individual portraits are indicative of unique personalities while they also emphasize themes common to the experience of all these women. Although there was commonality in the themes they seemed to differ in their patterning and emphases. For example, while control and attention were important to all of these women for some control was of greater importance. It is my belief that this demonstrates Bruner's (1990) notion of a distributed self (resonant form).

While these women became strippers for similar reasons. they brought, through their different personal histories, different ways of being and viewing the world to their chosen occupation. Angela came from a family which encouraged her personal expressiveness. She naturally possessed many of the characteristics important for success as a stripper–in the language of evolutionary theorists, she fit the adaptive landscape (Adaptive landscapes are the conditions in the environment to which the individual's characteristics "fit" for survival in that context. (Weiner, 1994)). In contrast, Alice and Jennifer had histories of abuse as children and developed street smarts and self-reliance at an early age. Thus, they brought an adaptability to stripping which manifested itself in the ease with which they took on the subcultural values and in their ability to fit into other contexts–they fit the adaptive landscape differently from Angela. While women such as Angela and Jill demonstrated a

strong integration of the stripper persona into their self structures (I believe it was the dominant self), Jennifer and Alice were more differentiated–other roles were also important to them. They appeared to be more flexible than their seemingly more integrated counterparts. Nevertheless, the women in this study, though they came to the occupation with different backgrounds, demonstrated ways of being in the world which were very similar. What is demonstrated here is that the self structure is an open system, in flux, and capable of adapting to a wide range of contexts.

The distributed self was seen most clearly in the attitudes, values and assumptions these women shared. Most of these women developed attitudes towards men prior to becoming strippers which were reinforced by their work experience. Themes such as control, attention, trust/mistrust, self-reliance, and feelings of being understood were required by the context–certain characteristics were necessary for success and survival, and what these women did not bring to the occupation, they developed. Thus Mary, who was shy and lacked assertiveness, is becoming assertive both in and out of the stripping context. Angela who had an ideal figure and the personality to perform, learned to manipulate others impressions of her in order to ensure her success. Findings such as these support the idea that Bateson (1972) was exploring decades ago which dealt with the contextual nature of being–that personality could change with context.

Balancing different roles was difficult for these women because they were in a context which mitigated against the exploration of alternative roles. Time constraints were most prominent, effecting their opportunity for personal relationships. Their stories reflected their loneliness and the difficulty in finding partners to share their lives with. Often the only people who understood them were their co-workers with whom they formed close bonds. Their work required them to protect their selves from daily stereotyping and the harassment from customers. They took steps to hide their identities and to protect their identity from others. In doing so they developed virtual selves which they tried to keep distinct from their everyday selves. The stripper persona protected the everyday self by dealing with customers, keeping their true feelings out of context, and their personal lives away from customers. In spite of their efforts to keep the two distinct the stripper persona could find itself in everyday contexts, either automatically, or by their own volition. It could be used as a strategy to

intimidate or to be assertive when needed. Thus, aspects of the stripper persona become part of their greater self structure as evidenced by their action in other contexts. In the words of one of the women "this job changes you".

For the women in this study control, vulnerability, and attention were the prominent themes as these women manipulated the persona to create distance between themselves and their customers. They worked to protect their everyday selves and identities from customers. In doing so the brought to and developed attitudes towards men. In general these women saw their customers as being capricious in their behaviour and potentially abusive. They found themselves seeing men in a negative light and often expressed their anger and frustration at men's critical and abusive behaviour. I chose not to emphasize the anger that these women felt from time to time because I saw it more as a part of a larger attitudinal structure. I did not feel that overall they were angry at men but rather that they had difficulty understanding them and that their anger was more a function of their difficulty in understanding as opposed to a primary motivational drive. I do recognize, however, that their negative view of men is a component of what allows them to strip for a living. I see this as connected to the need to be in control of men, or groups of men, especially for those women who were abused. The stripping context validated their feelings about their customers and men in general and it is this I see as the powerful motivating factor contributing to continuance in the occupation. In addition their anger may be part of the manipulativeness that they demonstrate towards customers. In general these women saw themselves as "exploiting men's attitudes towards women" rather than as victims.

For the women in this study their being in the world as a stripper was grounded in their bodily existence. They came to value appearances and noticed that their bodily comportment changed, reflecting changes in the self structure. As a virtual self, they felt differently as strippers than they did in their everyday lives. Others perceived and responded to them differently. The contents and structure of their awareness was altered when they were in stripper mode: time and space were perceived differently. I believe that these distinctions reflected different selves–demonstrating what Gergen (1991) would call a postmodern personality. The postmodern personality may feel fragmented or demonstrate the fluidity of human being by adapting to many contexts. The women in this study, through

their various personae, exemplify the postmodern dictum of there not being one truth or in this case one true self–they are multiple selves each with their own unique contribution to the polydimensional form of the postmodern psyche. These women learn to move between selves , and recognize through their embodied feeling that how they see and experience the world shifts across time and context.

The women in this study were attuned to their embodied existence. It was a source of knowing for them and it provided them with an entry to the persona. It see ms to me that for the most part personality theorists have given little consideration to the role of the body as a source of knowing. The women in this study, however, were very sensitive to how their bodies moved and felt and how tothers responded to them. Getting inot stripper mode-or the persona often involved the feeling of shifts in ones perception of time, space, and comportment. This finding does have implications for others in occupations where the use of the body is of import. For example, in the teaching profession there are numerous cognitive strategies and skills which can be implemented in the classroom. One could view teaching, however, as a role grounded in embodied existence. Paying attention to comportment, gesture, and how one feels in the classroom could offer teachers with another way of being. It could allow them to manipulate and pay attention to aspects of the persona that as a way of knowing about how their actions influence their students. They could use it to adjust what they are doing or thinking during their practice. A teacher's identity could be seen as a virtual self that one could tailor to one's needs and situation. Thus, a teacher working in a rough school could be taught the gestrues of a strong, assertive, confident person such as an athletics coach. Aspects of the self could be consciously activated by the teacher to provide basis for a more assertive persona. (For a good example of how this might work read the second chapter of Johnson's recent book Dangerous Minds.) The women in this study are a testament to the sense of empowerment afforded by constructing and learning how to adjust their persona to context. They have learned how touse it strategically to protect the self as well as to assert themselves in contexts relevant to their everyday life. The separation of the stripper persona from the everyday self was important in protecting the self structure as they learned to distance themselves from potentially harmful real feelings. This way of looking at role, personae, or alternate selves could be useful for

working professionals in highly stressful jobs and those for whom stress and burnout are problematic.

In conducting this work the true test of its ability to capture phenomena is its resonance with the experience of those who strip for a living. To date only two of the women have read this work and both enjoyed it and found it to be a fair representation of their experience, and in general those of others. One found it to be sufficiently "dark" representation of stripping and was glad to see that I didn't pull any punches with what I wrote. The other enjoyed the individual portraits but felt that I should have included something about their lack of sisterhood on the occasion of contests in my discussion.

I, as a white middle-class male in our admittedly sexist society, brought a particular view to this inquiry. I was a counsellor, teacher, coach who was reasonably well versed in cognitive psychology. Thus, my findings reflect these biases: The theories I chose to form the basis of the discussion were cognitively and phenomenologically based. The model I constructed was a cognitive science model rather than a feminist or developemental one. I did not get significant details on the sexual lives of these women. I did not see the degree to which anger may be a more important factor in their vocation than I am ready to admit, which some of the women who have read the dissertation have remarked upon. I do know that men are uncomfortable with women's anger, we see it as unfeminine or as an inappropriate emotion in a woman thereby denying them the right to express themselves. I began this work curious about how men and women in our society perceive each other and how this leads to misperception of being. In retrospect, while I felt that through my reading I was somewhat more enlightened than many men in our culture at the same time I found that I underestimated the prevalence of sexism on a day to day basis in women's lives. While we may have come a long way, there still seems to be a considerable distance to travel in terms of furthering understanding between the sexes. In my choice not to view these women through the lens of the social psychology of deviance I believe that their voices were given greater opportunity to speak. Rather than seeing them as deviant one can choose to see them as people working in an occupation that is a reflection of the values in our culture as opposed to a defiance of them.

As I complete this work I realize how complex ,unique, and similar these women are. I now find it astonishing that people can believe that these women are prostitutes and that they are labelled as such simply because others cannot believe that someone could be a stripper without also being a prostititute–that these women could lead everyday lives that contrast with who they presented themselves to be in the stripping context. I have become much more aware of the degree to which many women in our society must feel similar to the women in this study in terms of the splitting of psyche that seems to be necessary for survival. Women are expected to be sexual beings and yet when they are they are looked down upon. It seems to me that women in our society often find themselves in a double bind–similar to the condition that Virgina Woolf alluded to earlier in this century when she suggested that women, like horses are hoxed; they are hamstrung, allowing them to walk but not to run (Winterson, 1995).

> Piece by piece the fragments are returned; the body, the work, the love, the life. What can be known about me? What I say? What I do? What I have written? And which is true? That is which truer? Memory. My licenced inventions. Not all fragments return. (Winterson, 1994, p. 136).

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APPENDIX A

Questions to Guide the Research

It is has been my experience that interviews should begin with more familiar topics requiring less self-disclosure on their parts. Thus the interview will begin with such non-threatening questions as; How did you get into dancing? What was the initial attraction? what was on your mind at that time? Who, if anyone, introduced you into dancing? Describe your first experience up on stage for me. As they become more comfortable questions such as What did you think dancing was going to be like when you first began / How is it different ? What do you see in your past relationships that may have put you on track to become a dancer? Do you remember the first time you thought of becoming a dancer? How did your friends/family react ? How did they find out ? What was their reaction? How did you respond? Are there some things in your life missing or lacking because of your choice in occupation? The initial part it is also important to give them feedback as to the adequacy of their responses.

Questions to follow can focus on the day to day life experience of dancers . What is a typical day like? What is it like for you getting up on stage? Can you take me back to your last show - what is going through your mind when you are up there ? What are you concentrating on ? What do you after the show - what are you thinking/feeling? What do you with the time in between shows? What is that like? How does it differ from being up on stage ? Do you think or feel differently about yourself in between shows - in what ways ? What kind of image are you trying to present? How is that different from when you get off the stage? In what ways are you conscious of your body? Was it like this before you were a dancer? This can lead questions relating to roles and role differentiation - Do you feel that you are a different person up on stage ? Who are you then? How are you different when your not on stage? When do you stop being a dancer? How would you describe your relationships with the customers? What do you think of them? What other roles do you have in your life ? How do you put the dancer aside or is she always there? In what ways do you see yourself as different form you friends who are not dancers?

The personal lives of dancers : What was it like for you growing up? What were your relationships like with family, friends school ? Describe what kind of a kid you were ? Describe your relationship with your mother/father? Describe your relationship with men? With your current partner? How

does he/she feel about your dancing? Has it ever been a source of friction in the relationship? In what way , tell me about the last time it was ? Do you have a best friend ? who is he/ she ? Are they dancers ? How are your relationships with your friends who are dancers different from those who are not ? How do dancers relate to each other? What do they do? How would you describe your relationships with other dancers?

The Business side of dancing, goals, future outlook: What are your goals ? What do you see yourself doing when you leave dancing? What are you doing right now to help make that come true? How do you manage your money? Does anyone give you help or advice on money matters? What do you do when you take time away form dancing? What interests do you have outside of dancing? How much time do you spend pursuing these other things?